THE

Whole Duty of a Christian,

Plainly Represented

In Three Practical

ESSAYS,

On { *Baptism*, *Confirmation*, and *Repentance.*

CONTAINING

Full Instructions for a Holy Life: With Earnest Exhortations, especially to young Persons, drawn from the Consideration of the Severity of the Discipline of the Primitive Church.

The Second Edition.

~~*K. Clarke (S.) D. D., &c*~~

By *Samuel Clark*, M. A. Chaplain to the Right Reverend Father in God *JOHN* Lord Bishop of *Norwich.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Right Reverend Father in God JOHN *Lord Biſhop of* Norwich.

My Lord,

AS the many undeſerved Favours, with which Your Lordſhip has already been pleaſed to honour me, oblige me not to omit any Opportunity of teſtifying publickly the grateful Senſe which I ought always to have of Your Lordſhip's Kindneſs; ſo they encourage me to preſume further upon Your Lordſhip's Candour, in publiſhing theſe ſhort *Diſcourſes* under the Patronage of your Lordſhip's Name.

The ſingular Zeal which Your Lordſhip has ſhown in making frequent Confirmations, gives us reaſon to hope, that if the Directions which Your Lordſhip has former-

ly given for the preparing Perſons to be Confirmed, be as ſtrictly obſerved, as the regular and pious Uſe of that excellent Inſtitution, ſeems to be a moſt probable means of promoting true Religion and Holineſs; that Part of the Church, over which God has placed Your Lordſhip, may become exemplarily eminent for the Reſtoring of Primitive Piety and Order: To which State that it may effectually arrive; that Your Lordſhip may long ſee it continue therein; and that theſe *ſhort Diſcourſes* may contribute their Mite towards the promoting ſo Noble and Excellent a Deſign, is the Prayer of,

My LORD,

Your Lordſhip's moſt Dutiful Chaplain and moſt Obedient Servant,

S. Clarke.

THE PREFACE.

ST. Chryſoſtom *obſerves concerning the ancient* Hereticks, *that though their Opinions were never ſo widely different both from the truth and from each other, yet every one pretended that his particular Opinion was agreeable to the Scripture and founded in it, and that all different Opinions were diſcountenanced by it and might be confuted out of it: He obſerves alſo further, That the true reaſon of this their Confidence was, becauſe every one picked out of the* Scripture *all thoſe Paſſages, which according to the letter and ſound of the Words ſeemed to favour his particular Opinion, without at all regarding their cohærence and connexion, or the occaſion and deſign of their being written. Thus from thoſe*

Paſſages which ſpeak of Chriſt as a Man *and in his ſtate of Humiliation, ſome were ſo unreaſonable as to collect that he was but* a meer Man, *and ſo denied his* Divinity : *Others on the contrary from thoſe Paſſages which ſpeak of him as* God *and in his ſtate of Exaltation, did as weakly take occaſion to deny his* Humanity, *aſſerting that the* Humane Nature *was wholly ſwallowed up by the* Divine.

I wiſh the ſame Obſervation might not too truly be made, of moſt of the later Diſputes which have ariſen among Chriſtians *in our Days. For thus I believe, if we ſearch on the one hand into the ground of many of thoſe Mens Aſſertions, who love to aggravate the Corruption of humane Nature, and the natural Miſery of Mankind, we ſhall find the true Foundation of them to be the applying thoſe places of Scripture to the* whole bulk of Mankind, *which are evidently and expreſly ſpoken of ſome of the* worſt of Men : *On the other hand, the reaſon why others have ſo magnified the* natural Faculties of Men, *as to diminiſh and detract from* the Grace of God, *is becauſe they*

applied

applied those Texts to the generality of Men, *which are meant only of the most* perfect Christians. *Again, the Foundation of those Mens Opinion, who have extolled some one particular Virtue, in opposition to, or as an equivalent for, all other Duties, is their having interpreted those places of Scripture concerning* some one particular Virtue, *which are plainly meant of the* whole Christian Religion; *and the reason why others have thought no moral Virtues at all, necessary to be practised by Believers, is because they have applied those Texts to the* most Essential and Fundamental Duties of the Christian Religion, *which were intended only of the* Ceremonial Performances of the Jewish Law.

And thus, to come to the subject of our present Discourses, in the great Business of Repentance and Conversion, the reason why some Men have attributed the whole of Man's Conversion to such an extraordinary and uncertain Grace of God, as has given Men occasion to sit still in their Sins, in expectation of the time when this extraordinary Grace should be poured down upon them; is, because

becauſe they have fixed that Aſſiſtance of God's Grace to an uncertain *Period, which God himſelf has conſtantly annexed to his Ordinances, and which he* certainly *beſtows upon Men at their Baptiſm, or at their ſolemn taking upon themſelves the Profeſſion of Religion. And the reaſon why others have made Repentance ſo ſhort and ſo eaſie a buſineſs, is becauſe they have* too largely *applied thoſe great Promiſes in the Goſpel, to* the circular and repeated Repentances of Chriſtians, *which are, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, confined to the* great Repentance or Converſion of Unbelievers.

My deſign in the following Eſſays *is to endeavour briefly to ſet this great and moſt important Matter in its true Light; from the Analogy of Scripture, and from the Senſe of the pureſt Ages of the Primitive Church: To ſhow that at* Baptiſm *God* always *beſtows that Grace, which is neceſſary to enable Men to perform their Duty; and* that *to thoſe who are Baptized in their Infancy, this Grace is ſealed and aſſured at* Confirmation: That *from henceforward Men are bound with that Aſſiſtance to live in the conſtant*

conſtant practiſe of their known Duty and are not to expect (except in extraordinary Caſes) any extraordinary, much leſs irreſiſtible Grace, *to preſerve them in their Duty or to convert them from Sin:* That *if after this they fall into any* great *Wickedneſs, they are bound to a proportionably* great *and* particular *Repentance: And* that *as the Goſpel hath given ſufficient aſſurance of ſuch Repentance being accepted, to comfort and encourage all true Penitents; ſo it has ſufficiently ſhown the* difficulty *of it* at all times, *and the* extreme danger *of it* when late, *to deter Men from delaying it when they are convinced of its Neceſſity, and from adding to their Sins when they hope to have them forgiven.*

There is nothing with which the Devil more effectually inpoſes upon Men in theſe latter Ages of the World, than with falſe notions of Repentance: And if it muſt be confeſſed that many *in the Primitive times were* too ſevere *in their apprehenſions concerning it, 'tis certain there are* many more *in our Days* not ſevere enough: *At leaſt I am ſure there is no Man who has a true*

Sense of Religion, and a just apprehension of the vast concern of eternal Happiness or Misery, but will be much more desirous to know the utmost strictness of the Conditions upon which so mighty a Stake depends, than to run the hazard of being mistaken in judging too loosly of them.

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Of BAPTISM.

CHAP. I.

Of Baptiſm in general.

1. *Baptiſm* is the Rite, whereby thoſe who believe in *Chriſt*, are ſolemnly admitted to be Members of the *Chriſtian Church*. What the firſt Original of Baptizing with Water was; how the Jews uſed to Baptize their Proſelytes, and the Heathens thoſe who were to be initiated to any ſacred Function; I ſhall not now enquire. Sufficient it is to our preſent purpoſe, that our Saviour has inſtituted this Sacrament, as a Rite whereby Converts at their Admiſſion into his Church, do ſolemnly oblige themſelves to live ſuitably to the Profeſſion they then enter into; and whereby they are intitled to all the Benefits and Priveledges belonging to the Society into which they are admitted.

2. This *Baptiſm* is either, 1. *Of Perſons of riper Years*; or 2. *Of Infants*. At the firſt Preaching of the Goſpel, the main Body of Chriſtians conſiſted of thoſe, who had by the Apoſtles Preaching been converted from the Jewiſh or from the Gentile Religion, to the Chriſtian; and theſe were conſequently Baptized into the Name of Chriſt, after they were come to *riper Years*. Afterwards, when the Chriſtian Religion had ſpread it ſelf over whole Countries and Nations, the Church conſiſted chiefly of ſuch as were born of Chriſtian Parents, and educated from the beginning in the Chriſtian Religion; and theſe were generally, even in the Primitive times, admitted into the Church by Baptiſm *in their Infancy*.

3. In the Baptiſm of *Perſons of riper Years*, we muſt obſerve, 1. What was required of them *before-hand*, in order to pepare them for Baptiſm: 2. In what *manner* they were baptized; to what *Privileges* they were admitted; and to what *Duties* they were engaged, by their Baptiſm: And 3. What was required of them *after* their Baptiſm.

CHAP. II.

What was required of Perſons to be Baptized in the Primitive Church, in order to fit them for Baptiſm.

1. THE firſt thing to be conſidered in the Baptiſm of Perſons converted to Chriſtianity, is, what was required of them *before-hand*, in order to fit them for this moſt ſolemn Admiſſion into the Church of Chriſt. Now that which was indiſpenſibly neceſſary to prepare them for this ſolemnity, and to qualifie them to be partakers of this Holy Sacrament, was *Faith* and *Repentance*; *i. e.* a Declaration of their *firm Belief* of the great Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion, and of their *reſolution to live ſuitably* to that Belief.

2. In the Apoſtles times, when the Miracles wrought by thoſe firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity, were ſo convincing and the extraordinary Grace of God, poured down upon Men, ſo effectual, as to convert them to the Faith of Chriſt as it were in an *inſtant*; a ſingle Declaration of their Faith and Repentance, ſeems to have been accounted ſufficient to prepare them to receive Baptiſm immediately. For thus we find St. *Philip* baptizing the Eunuch immediately upon his profeſſing his Belief that Jeſus Chriſt was the Son of God, *Acts* 8. 38. and St. *Paul* baptizing the Jailor immediately upon his being converted by the Miracle of the Priſon Doors opening with an Earthquake, *Acts* 16. 33.

3. But afterwards, when theſe mighty Operations of the Spirit grew leſs common, and Men began to be convinced more gradually by the ordinary means of the Preaching of the Word, it was not thought ſufficient in moſt Churches, for Men upon their Converſion to *Profeſs* their Faith and their Repentance, but they were obliged to *give* ſome *evidence* of the ſincerity of both, before they could be admitted into the Church by Baptiſm. If they had formerly been great Sinners, they were to evidence their Repentance by *Prayers*, and *Watchings* and *Faſtings*, and *Confeſſing their Sins*: They were to demonſtrate by the real change of their whole courſe of Life, that they had actually renounced all the Rites and Practices of their for-

former Profeſſion, and would for the future conform their Lives to the Rules of the Chriſtian Inſtitution: They were to endeavour to purge their Conſcience from every evil Work, that their Baptiſm might be, *not the putting away the filth of the Fleſh, but the anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.* 1 Pet. 3. 21.

4. They who were willing thus to make proof of their Repentance, and of their ſincere deſire to be admitted into the Church of God, were *Catechiſed* in all thoſe neceſſary Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, which they were to make publick profeſſion of at their Baptiſm: They were fully inſtructed in the excellent Moral Precepts of that Divine Religion, which they were to practice the remaining part of their Lives: And then they were thought prepared for the *waſhing of Regeneration*, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*.

CHAP. III.

In what manner *Perſons converted to Chriſtianity were baptized; to what* Privileges *they were admitted; and to what* Duties *they were engaged by their Baptiſm.*

1. When the Perſon to be baptized was thus prepared, and the time appointed come; which was uſually at *Eaſter* or *Whitſontide*, the Commemorations of our Saviour's *Paſſion* and *Reſurrection* and of the *great Effuſion of the Holy Spirit*, things principally reſpected in this Sacrament; (though it might alſo upon occaſion be celebrated at *any other* time;) When the Perſon, I ſay, was thus prepared, he was brought by the Prieſt to a convenient place, where there was plenty of Water; and being ſtript of all his Cloaths, he *in the firſt place*, with ſtretched out Arms in a moſt ſolemn manner renounced the *Devil* and all his Works, the *Pomps* and Vanities of this wicked World, and all, not only the abſolutely *ſinful*, but alſo the *lawful deſires of the Fleſh*, ſo far as to keep them within the moſt ſtrict bounds, and moſt exact Obedience to the Laws of Reaſon and Religion. *Then* he made Profeſſion of his Faith *in one God*, the Father Almighty, *&c. in Jeſus Chriſt* his only Son our Lord, *&c.* and *in the Holy Ghoſt*, the Holy Catholick Church, *&c.*

After which he was baptized in the Name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghoſt*; being immerſed in the Water *three times*, once at the Name of each Perſon in the ever bleſſed Trinity. Which being done, he came up out of the Water; and *then* (according to the Cuſtom of ſome Churches) he was anointed with Oil, with the addition of ſome other Ceremonies, which as they were in their own Nature *indifferent*, ſo they were uſed only in *ſome* places, and that diverſly according to the different uſage of particular Churches. *After all which*, he was cloathed with a white Robe, and ſo admitted among the *Faithful* to the Communion of the Church: which laſt Ceremony the Greeks (as a Learned Writer of our own obſerves,) keep up to this Day; putting upon the Child immediately after Baptiſm a white Garment, with this Form, *Receive this white and immaculate Cloathing, and bring it with thee unſpotted before the Tribunal of Chriſt, and thou ſhalt inherit eternal Life.*

2. This was the Form and Manner, in which Perſons converted to Chriſtianity were Baptized in the Primitive Church: And by all theſe *outward and viſible Ceremonies*, were ſignificantly repreſented certain *inward and inviſible things*; which were either the *Privileges* to the *injoyment* of which the Perſon Baptized was intituled: Or the *Duties* to the *Performance* of which he was engaged by his Baptiſm.

3. The firſt *Grace* or *Privilege*, which God annexed to the right uſe of this Ordinance of Baptiſm, and to which the Perſon Baptized was conſequently intitled, was *Remiſſion of all paſt Sins*. The deſign of our Saviour's coming into the World, was by the Merit of his Death and Suffering to purchaſe Pardon and Remiſſion for all thoſe, who ſhould *believe* in his Name and *obey* his Goſpel; *Rom.* 3. 25. *Whom God has ſet forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteouſneſs for the Remiſſion of Sins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God.* Now the Means by which this Pardon is applied, and the Seal by which it is ſecured to all thoſe who *Believe*, and by Repentance begin to *Obey* the Goſpel, is *Baptiſm*. Whoſoever therefore was converted to Chriſtianity, and was baptized, *was baptized into the Death of Chriſt*; *i. e.* was by Baptiſm intitled to the Benefit

Benefit of the Pardon purchaſed by his Death and Paſſion: As *his Body* was *waſhed with pure* Water, ſo his Sins were abſolutely done away by the Blood of Chriſt, and his *Heart ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience*, Heb. 10. 22. Hence Baptiſm is called the *Waſhing* of Regeneration, *Tit.* 3. 5. and they who by the Apoſtles Preaching or by any other more extraordinary Means, were convinced of the Truth of the Goſpel, were exhorted immediately to be baptized, and *waſh away their Sins*; Acts 22. 16. *And now why tarrieſt thou? Ariſe, and be baptized, and waſh away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord*; And *Acts* 2. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins:* To which thoſe Places alſo ſeem manifeſtly to allude, *Rev.* 1. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our Sins in his own Blood*; and *Rev.* 7. 14. *Theſe are they which have waſhed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* The plain meaning of all which Paſſages is this; That as a new-born Infant is without Spot, Innocent and Sinleſs; ſo every one that is *born of Water*, i. e. regenerated by Baptiſm, is in the account of God as if he had never ſinned, cloathed with the white and ſpotleſs Garment of Innocence, which if he never *defile* by groſs and wilful Sins, *he ſhall walk in white with Chriſt*, for *he* ſhall be *worthy*, *Rev.* 3. 4.

4. The next *Privilege* which Baptiſm principally and moſt ſignificantly repreſented, was the *Admiſſion* of the Convert *into the Church or Family of God.* All that received Baptiſm, were thereby actually admitted into the Society of Chriſtians, and to the participation of all the Benefits which God beſtows upon his Church: They were admitted to the *Communion of the Saints* of God, and to the *Fellowſhip of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, 1 Cor. 1. 9. They were made *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints and of the Houſhold of God*, Ep. 2. 19. being come *unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, &c. *Heb.* 12. 22. More particularly, they were made, firſt *Members of Chriſt*; i. e. they

were incorporated into that Body, whereof Chriſt is the Head. Secondly, They were made *Children of God*; *i. e.* they were enroll'd in the number of thoſe, whom God had choſen to be his Peculiar and Elect People, and whom he deſigned to govern with the ſame tenderneſs, as an affectionate and merciful Father does his moſt beloved Children: which is what the Apoſtles expreſs by our being *called the Sons of God*, 1 John 3. 1. by our having *received the Adoption of Sons*, Gal. 4. 5. and by our having *power* given us to *become the Sons of God*, John 1. 12. Laſtly, *They were made Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven*; i. e. they who before were *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Iſrael, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the World*, did by Baptiſm enter into that Covenant, wherein God aſſured the Promiſe of Eternal Life, to all thoſe who ſhould believe and repent: And this is what the Apoſtle intends by our having *our Citizen-ſhip in Heaven*, Phil. 3. 20, and by being *Heirs of God and joynt Heirs with Chriſt, that we may be glorified together with him*, Rom. 8. 17.

5. Another *Privilege* which was repreſented and conferred by Baptiſm, was the *Influence and Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit*. All Perſons that were baptized, as their Bodies were waſhed and purified with *Water*, ſo their Minds were ſanctified by the *Spirit* of God: *But ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the Name of our Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. At their Baptiſm they received the Holy Ghoſt, as a Gift conſtantly annexed to that Ordinance; and unleſs they quenched and grieved it by their Sins committed afterwards, it always continued with them from thenceforward, aſſiſting and enabling them to perform their Duty, ſtrengthening and comforting them under Temptations and Afflictions, and *bearing Witneſs with their Spirit, that they were the Children of God.* Rom. 8. 16. At the firſt Preaching of the Goſpel, this influence of the Holy Spirit frequently diſcovered it ſelf, in thoſe extraordinary Gifts of Speaking with Tongues, Working Miracles, *&c.* as appears in the Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles. But theſe by degrees ceaſing, it afterwards continued to evidence it ſelf in the ſtrange and almoſt miraculous change, which it made

made in the Minds of Men, from the moſt corrupt and vicious, to the moſt virtuous and heavenly Diſpoſition, almoſt in an inſtant upon their being baptized. And when this effect alſo grew leſs frequent, as the Zeal and Purity of the Chriſtians declined; it yet continued always by its ſecret Power to renew and transform Mens Minds, to inſtruct Men in their Duty, and to inable them to perform it. Hence Baptiſm is call'ed the *Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, Tit. 3. 5. and a being *born of Water and of the Spirit*, John 3. 5. and by the Antients frequently, *Illumination*: And Perſons baptized are ſaid to have been *enlightned*, to have *taſted of the heavenly Gift*, and to have been *made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, Heb. 6. 4.

6. The laſt *Privilege* which Perſons *Baptized* were intled to by virtue of that Ordinance, was an *Aſſurance of a Reſurrection to eternal Life*. They received, as hath been ſaid, the Holy Spirit of God; and that Spirit, ſo long as it dwelt with them, was a * *Seal* and ‖ *Earneſt* of their future Reſurrection: For *if the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*, Rom. 8. 11. And this was moſt ſignificantly repreſented by their deſcending into the Water, and riſing out of it again: For as Chriſt deſcended into the Earth, and *was raiſed again from the dead by the Glory of the Father*; So Perſons baptized were *buried with him by Baptiſm into Death*, Rom. 6. 4. and roſe again after the ſimilitude of his Reſurrection; They were *planted together in the likeneſs of his Death*; and they were by this Sign aſſured, that they ſhould *be alſo in the likeneſs of his Reſurrection*. Thus the Apoſtle St. *Paul Coloſ.* 2. 12. Ye are *buried with him in Baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him through the Faith of the Operation of God, who hath raiſed him from the dead*. To which St. *Peter* ſeems likewiſe to allude, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. *The like Figure whereunto* (*viz*, to the ſaving of the Ark by the Water of the Flood) *even Baptiſm doth alſo now ſave us, by the* Reſurrection *of Chriſt*.

* 2 Cor. 1. v. 22. Eph. 1. 13. ch. 4. 30.
‖ 2 Cor. 1. v. 22. 5. 5. Eph. 1. 14.

7. Theſe are the Spiritual *Graces* or *Privileges*, which were repreſented by the Outward and Viſible Signs in Baptiſm

tiſm and conferr'd by their means; And *Theſe* are what *God on his part* engageth and aſſures to us, in that Great and Holy Covenant. There are other things, which the *Perſons Baptized* obliged themſelves to *on their part* in that Covenant; and theſe are the *Duties* which by their Baptiſm they vow and take upon themſelves to perform, repreſented alſo by the ſame Outward and Viſible Signs. The firſt of theſe Duties which the Perſons baptized promiſed and obliged themſelves to perform, was a *Conſtant Confeſſion of the Faith of Chriſt and Profeſſion of his Religion.* They were admitted by Baptiſm into the Church and Family of Chriſt; and they were bound at all times, to own themſelves his Diſciples: They were ſolemnly *baptized into his Death*, Rom. 6. 3. and they were obliged not to be aſham'd of the Croſs of Chriſt, and to confeſs the Faith of him crucified: They owned publickly at their Baptiſm, their Belief *in God the Father Almighty, and in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord*; and they were bound at all times to make profeſſion of this Faith: They had *with the Heart believed unto Righteouſneſs*, Rom. 10. 10. and they thought *that with the Mouth, Confeſſion* was neceſſary to be *made unto Salvation*: They were aſſured, that if they *confeſſed Chriſt before Men*, he would alſo *confeſs them before his Father which is in Heaven, and before the Angels of God*, Lu. 12. 8. but if they were *aſhamed of him, and denyed him before Men, he would alſo be aſhamed of them when he came in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.* And ſo mighty an effect had this conſideration upon the primitive Chriſtians, that in the times of Perſecution, when they were tempted to deny their Saviour and renounce the Faith which they had once Embraced, they choſe rather to endure the moſt exquiſite Torments that the Wit of Man could invent, than either to renounce or diſſemble their Chriſtianity; and thoſe who out of Fear denyed or were aſhamed to confeſs their Faith, they looked upon to have forfeited and renounced their Baptiſm, as having *crucified to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame*, Heb. 6. 6.

8. The Second Thing to which Perſons baptized ſolemnly obliged themſelves by their Baptiſm, *was a Death unto Sin, and a New-Birth unto Righteouſneſs*, i. e. they engaged utterly and for ever to forſake, all manner of Sin and

and Wickedneſs; all *Idolatrous and Superſtitious Worſhip of falſe Gods*; all *Injuſtice, Wrong, Fraud and Uncharitableneſs towards Men*; *all the Pride and Vanity, the Pomp and Luxury of this preſent World*; *all the Luſts of the Fleſh, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Gluttony, Drunkenneſs, Revellings*, and ſuch like: And for the future they promiſed to make it the buſineſs of their lives, to fulfil all Righteouſneſs according to the ſtricteſt Rules of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Diſcipline; to *Worſhip the only true God, with all Devotion, Reverence and Humility*; to be *exactly juſt in their Dealings with Men*, and *generouſly charitable upon all Occaſions*; in fine, to be *Temperate and Sober, Chaſt and Pure*, as the Worſhippers of God and the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt. This was *indeed* a *Dying unto Sin*, and *Living unto Righteouſneſs*; This was *properly* a being *Regenerated* or *Born again*; This was *truly* a being *Waſhed, Sanctified* and *Juſtified*, in the Name of Chriſt, and by the Spirit of God: And indeed, this was the *principal thing* which was ſignified in Baptiſm, and the *principal end* for which the whole Ordinance was *deſigned*; This was what the Perſon to be baptized was to *profeſs with his own Mouth*, when he renounced the Devil and all his Works; and this was what was principally *repreſented* by that main part of the Ceremony, *the deſcending into the Water* and *riſing out of it again*; For ſo the Apoſtle St. *Paul* moſt fully explains it, *Rom.* 6. 3. *Know ye not that ſo many of us, as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of Life*; *Knowing this, that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin*: That is, the deſign of our deſcending into the Water to be baptized, and riſing again out of it, was to mind us, that as we then received remiſſion of our paſt Sins by Virtue of Chriſt's having died *for Sin*; ſo we our ſelves were in like manner to die and be buried *to Sin*, and riſe again and to walk for the future with Chriſt in newneſs and holineſs of Life. This therefore was the principal thing reſpected in Baptiſm, and without this *anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*, the waſhing or *putting away the filth of the*

Fleſh, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. could nothing avail in the ſight of God. Baptiſm is not the *Waſhing and Cleanſing of the Body*, but the *Purifying of the Mind*, from every evil Work, to ſerve the living God; without which, Baptiſm is ſo far from being available to the remiſſion of Sin, that on the contrary it makes it far the more grievous and inexcuſable. But of this, more in the next Chapter.

9. The third and laſt thing, to which Men were ſolemnly engaged at their Baptiſm, was *Self-denyal and Contempt of the World*. Our Saviour had told his Diſciples, That *whoſoever* would *come after him*, muſt *deny himſelf and take up his Croſs and follow him*; Luk. 14. 26. that *whoſoever* was not willing *to forſake all that he had, Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo*, he could not be *his Diſciple*: And therefore when any Man came to be baptized, he was accordingly obliged to *renounce the World*, and all its *Glory*, the *Pomps* and *Vanities*, the *Splendor* and *Pleaſures* of it: He profeſſed himſelf a Candidate for the *Glory* that ſhould *be revealed hereafter*; and that therefore he would never be ambitious for that *Honour*, which Men ſo earneſtly contend for *here*: He declared that he expected his Portion in thoſe *ſpiritual Joys*, which *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive them*, 1 Cor 2. 9. and therefore he would never ſet his Heart and Affections upon any *groſs* and *ſenſual Pleaſure*: He profeſſed that from thence forward his *Treaſure* ſhould be *in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break thro' and ſteal*, Mat. 6. 20. and that therefore he would never be covetous of any *Riches*, or Poſſeſſions *on Earth*: In a word, he engaged to make it the main Buſineſs of his Life, to prepare and fit himſelf to be partaker of thoſe things, which God had for them that love him laid up *in the next World*; and that therefore he would never be extreamly ſolicitous after any thing *in this*. This was what the Primitive Chriſtians underſtood by their *Renouncing* the World. They thought themſelves obliged not only to forſake all *groſs* and *palpably ſinful Luſts*, but alſo to be very ſparing in their Enjoyments of what was *Lawful*: They looked upon *this* World and the *next*, as Enemies to each other; and that they were to fight as Soldiers

Soldiers under the Banner of Chriſt, *againſt* the *Pleaſures and Temptations* of *this World*, *for the Glories of the other.* And for an Emblem of this it was, that in ſome Churches they anointed the baptized Perſon with Oil: He was compared to a *Combatant*, to a *Runner* juſt preparing to ſtart in the Chriſtian Race; and they minded him, that if thoſe *who ſtrive for the Maſtery only to obtain a corruptible Crown*, 1 Cor. 9. 25. are *temperate in all things*, much more ought *he* to *confirm and ſtrengthen himſelf*, to *prepare and harden himſelf*, to be *ready and expedite*, to be *temperate and abſtemious*, and to get perfectly *above* all thoſe earthly deſires, which would hinder and clogg him in that great Race, which he was to run for the *Crown of Immortality*. 'Tis true, the forſaking all worldly Poſſeſſions for the Name of Chriſt, was a condition more particularly required in thoſe Primitive times of Perſecution: But how far it ſtill obliges *us*, (as it moſt certainly does in *ſome* Senſe) ſhall be conſidered in its proper Place.

CHAP. IV.

What was required of Perſons after Baptiſm.

1. WHen the whole Ceremony was finiſhed, the Perſon baptized was cloathed (as has been already obſerved) with a white Garment; and then he was admitted to the Communion of the Faithful: And that which was afterward required of him, was this one great and neceſſary Thing, *To keep this Baptiſm Pure and Undefiled, the remaining part of his Life.*

2. To the *keeping* a Man's *Baptiſm Pure and Undefiled through the remaining part of his Life*, that which was thought abſolutely neceſſary in the Primitive Church, was this: *Firſt*, That he from that time forward preſerved himſelf from falling, not only into the *Habit*, but even ſo much as into the *ſingle Act* of any of theſe groſs and palpable Wickednеſſes; *Idolatry*, *Perjury*, *Blaſphemy*; *Murder*, *Sedition*, *Theft*, *manifeſt Injuſtice*, *Cheating*; *Adultery*, *Fornication*, *Uncleanneſs*, *Drunkenneſs*, *Revelling*; and ſuch like; of which St. *Paul* expreſly and peremptorily declares, and repeats it with great earneſtneſs over and over again, that *they who do ſuch things, ſhall have no*

Inheritance

Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of God. One that was born of God, might be ſurprized into an unheeded Sin; but into the groſs Act of any of theſe *manifeſt and notorious* Impieties, they thought he was *never* to be ſeduced; and if he were, that he ceaſed to be the Servant of God; For *whoſoever abideth in him, ſinneth not*; and *whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin*; *for his Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God*, 1 John 3. 6. From the Acts therefore of any of theſe *great and plain* Wickedneſſes, which ſtare Men in the Face, and at the firſt view terrifie Mens Conſciences, they thought it *indiſpenſably* neceſſary that a Man abſtained *wholly*; and that *theſe* things were not ſo much as to be *once named* among Chriſtians, Eph. 5. 3. But then ſecondly, To the keeping a Man's *Baptiſm pure and undefiled*, that which was thought further neceſſary was, *that* from falling into an *habitual* practice of any of thoſe *ſmaller and leſs ſcandalous* Sins, which careleſneſs and culpable Ignorance would be very apt to betray a Man into *the Acts* of, he ought to indeavour to ſecure himſelf by great cautiouſneſs, and ſincere enquiry after the knowledge of his Duty; *that* from Sins of Omiſſion, from growing cool in Religion, and remitting of his firſt Love, he ought to indeavour to preſerve himſelf by conſtant Meditation, and hearty Prayer to God for the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit; *that* in order to grow in Grace, he ought to be always humble and teachable, penitent and devout, meek in Spirit, and pure in Mind; and that to attain Perfection, he ought to be always *preſſing forward towards the mark of the prize of the high calling*, *Phil.* 3. 14. with a perfect contempt of the World, an entire Love of God, and a boundleſs Charity to all Mankind.

3. This was what the Primitive Chriſtians underſtood by keeping their *Baptiſm pure and undefiled*; viz. A regular and conſtant practice of all Holineſs and Virtue, from the time of their Baptiſm to their Death. And to this they thought themſelvs moſt ſtrongly obliged, by the very Form of their Baptiſm: They were *immerſed* into the Water, and they riſe out of it again, and this great Solemnity was never after to be repeated; in token that as Chriſt *once* died for Sin, and roſe again *never* to come under the power of Death any more; ſo they were this

once

once to have their Sins perfectly waſht away by his Blood, and were bound *never* to return under the Power of them any more. Thus St. *Paul* himſelf moſt expreſly and excellently argues, *Rom c. 6. v. 9. Knowing that Chriſt being raiſed from the dead, dieth no more; Death hath no more dominion over him; For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: Likewiſe reckon ye alſo your ſelves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord: Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that you ſhould obey it in the Luſts thereof.* The force of which Argument is plainly this: When we deſcended into the Water, and riſe out of it again, we made publick profeſſion, that as we hoped for pardon of our paſt Sins through the Merits of the Death of Chriſt, ſo we our ſelves would thenceforth die unto Sin, that is, utterly caſt it off and forſake it, and for the future riſe again to walk with Chriſt in newneſs and holineſs of Life: So that unleſs from the time of our thus putting off Sin, we continue conſtantly to live in all Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, we have no juſt reaſon to expect Remiſſion by Virtue of the Death of Chriſt, into which we were baptized: For it being the expreſs Condition of the Remiſſion of Sin, that we continue no longer in it, but live from thenceforth unto God; the Blood of Chriſt it ſelf, which was ſhed to be a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, can avail nothing for one that continues in Sin, whom our Saviour himſelf has particularly excepted from the benefit of the Pardon purchaſed by his Death and Paſſion.

4. Accordingly Perſons after their Baptiſm were inſtructed, *That* they muſt now utterly and for ever renounce, all the ſinful Pleaſures and Deſires of the World: *They were told, that* they now received Remiſſion of their *paſt* Sins, by Virtue of the Death of Chriſt; and therefore, they muſt take great heed that they ſinned *no more*: *They were told, that* they now waſhed their Garments in the Blood of the Lamb, *Rev.* 7. 14. (for a ſignal whereof they were accordingly cloathed in white;) and that they muſt take care to bring this unſpotted Innocence with them, before the Tribunal of Chriſt: (To which Cuſtom our Saviour himſelf ſeems to allude, *Rev.* 3. 4. Thou haſt a few Names even in *Sardis*, which have not defiled *their Garments*

and

and they ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;) *They were told, that* they were now baptized for the Remiſſion of all their paſt Sins; and if they kept not this Baptiſm pure and undefiled, they could not be ſure they ſhould ever be able to obtain the like *full and perfect* Remiſſion again: *They were told, that* they now ſtarted in that great Race, which they were to run for the Crown of Immortality; and if thoſe who were found tardy in an Earthly Race, were beaten and diſgraced, of how much ſorer Puniſhment ſhould they be thought worthy, who negligently faultred in the Race of Immortality? *They were told, that* they now entred into that Covenant of God, the Seal whereof was, *Let every one that Names the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. 2. 19. and if they kept not this Seal, their Puniſhment would be among Apoſtates, whoſe Worm ſhall not die, and whoſe Fire ſhall not be quenched. *They were told, that* they had now *eſcaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Pet. 2. 20. and if after this they ſhould *be again intangled therein, and be overcome, and turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them*, their Puniſhment ſhould be double to that of thoſe, who had *never known the way of Righteouſneſs:* Finally, *They were told, that* they *were* now *enlightened*, and had *taſted of the Heavenly Gift*, and were made *partakers of the H. Ghoſt*, and were *ſealed thereby unto the Day of Redemption*; and if after this they ſhould *fall away*, it would be exceeding difficult to *renew* them to Repentance, Heb. 6. 6. *That* they had now *received the* perfect *Knowledge of the Truth*; and if after this *they ſinned wilfully*, there would *remain no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgement and fiery Indignation, which ſhould devour the Adverſary*, Heb. 10. 21. In a word, *That* they now received a *certain* Promiſe and Aſſurance of Eternal Life; but if they would ſell this Bleſſing for the momentary gratifications of Senſe, they might perhaps afterwards *be rejected* when they ſhould deſire to *inherit it*, and *find no place for Repentance, tho' they might ſeek it carefully with Tears*, Heb. 12. 17.

5. Theſe were the *ſevere* cautions, with which the Primitive Church obliged baptized Perſons upon their utmoſt Peril, to keep themſelves ſtedfaſt from the time of their Baptiſm in all holy and blameleſs Converſation. Thoſe who

who *did* continue to walk ſuitably to this Profeſſion, were ſaid to be *waſhed*, to be *ſanctified*, to be *juſtified*, *in the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the Spirit of our God* 1 Cor. 6. 11. And becauſe in thoſe pureſt times, there were hardly any among Chriſtians, who did not walk ſuitably to their Profeſſion; it being the ſame thing *then* to be a Chriſtian and to be a good Man; therefore thoſe Terms, *Elect*, *Regenerate*, *Sanctified*, *born of God*, and the like, which we now appropriate only to the beſt and moſt Holy Men, are not in Scripture ſo appropriated, but applied promiſcuouſly to all Chriſtians; as appears from the Titles of the Apoſtles Letters, in which whole Churches in general are called *Elect*, *Sanctified*, and the like; and moſt evidently from St. *John*, who in his firſt Epiſtle, c. 5. ver. 1. *Whoſoever*, ſaith he, *believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is* born of God: *Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, i. e. every Chriſtian; there being hardly any one in *thoſe times*, who was not indeed, what he profeſſed and pretended to be, a *Regenerate*, *Sanctified* and *Elect* Perſon. And as Chriſtians who then lived thus ſuitably to their Profeſſion, were ſtiled *Regenerate*, *Sanctified*, and the like; ſo they who continued to live thus ſuitably *to the end*, were ſaid to *Perſevere*: and of ſuch *only* was it ſaid, that they *Perſevered*; in oppoſition to thoſe who after their Baptiſm lapſed into any notorious Trangreſſion. For one that had *thus* lapſed, they did not think it ſufficient that he ſhould repeat his Crime no more, (which was the condition of *Baptiſmal* Remiſſion,) but he was obliged by a long courſe of *Mortification*, *Prayers*, *Tears* and *good Works*, to endeavour to waſh out the Stain and Guilt. Nay, and even this courſe alſo they allowed of but *Once*; not that true Repentance would at any time be in vain and unacceptable to God, but (as an ancient Writer expreſſes it,) that *that* which was the only remaining Remedy, might not by being made too eaſy, grow contemptible and ineffectual.

6. And now let *Us* think upon this; let *Us* conſider this, with ſhame and confuſion of Faces; who I do not ſay after *Baptiſm* and the ſolemn taking upon our ſelves the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, but after frequent *Purpoſes* and *Promiſes* of Reformation, after repeated *Vows* and *Reſolutions* of Amendment, nay, perhaps after Confirming

firming all theſe by the *Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Chriſt*, do yet continue in Sin and defer our Repentance. The *Primitive Chriſtians* thought themſelves abſolutely obliged to live in the conſtant Practice of all Holineſs and Vertue, from the time of their Baptiſm to their Death; and can *We* hope to be accepted, if notwithſtanding all our Pretences to Repentance and Reformation, we ſtill continue under the weak excuſes of Infirmity and Inadvertency, to live in any known Sin? Doth our Baptiſmal Vow lay no obligation upon us? or hath God eſtabliſhed a Covenant with us upon ſlighter Terms, and entail'd his Promiſes to us upon eaſier Conditions, than he did to the firſt and pureſt Chriſtians? *Let no Man deceive you*, ſaith St. *John*, *He that doth Righteouſneſs, is Righteous*, 1 John 3. 7. 'Tis true, the caſe is not altogether the ſame with us, as it was with them: We live in Chriſtian Nations and under Chriſtian Governments, where there are no Pagans to be converted to Chriſtianity, and to be baptized *after their Repentance*, and *with a full conviction of Mind*: And of thoſe who are born of Chriſtian Parents, there are very few ſo happy, as not to be entangled in the Habit of any Sin, before they come to a perfect Underſtanding and compleat conviction of all the Truths of Religion; And in this caſe it *muſt* indeed be confeſſed, that it cannot but require *ſome time*, perfectly to overcome a vitious diſpoſition, and to obtain the Habit of the contrary Vertue. But may we therefore ſpend *our whole Lives* in little and weak ſtruglings againſt Sin, without ever arriving at that pitch of Vertue, which was anciently thought neceſſary to prepare a Man for Baptiſm? May we therefore be excuſed from ever becoming *perfect* Chriſtians, becauſe we were brought up all along in the Chriſtian Religion, and were never converted by any ſudden Conviction? When a Man is in that State deſcribed by St. *Paul* in the 7th chap. to the *Romans*, that he is convinced of the evil of great and known Sins, and ſets his Mind to reſiſt and ſtrive againſt them, yet not ſo but that thro' the viciouſneſs of his Inclination or the force of evil Habits he frequently relapſes and is intangled in them again; 'tis a Sign indeed that ſuch a one is not yet *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin*; there is hopes that through the Grace of God he may *at length* prevail and overcome his Temptations; but

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he has not *yet* overcome, he has not *yet* attained to be a good Chriſtian; nor can he be ſaid to have done ſo, till he has brought himſelf into ſuch a ſtate, as that he be perfectly gotten *above* all the Temptations to know Sin, and aſſured by the Grace of God, that he ſhall not fall into it any more. To ſuch a ſtate as this, he muſt reſolve to arrive; and he muſt reſolve to arrive at it *timely*, that he may have a certain Title to the reward of Obedience. There is hardly any Man ſo wicked, who does not deſign to repent at one time or other before he dies; and our Saviour *has* indeed in his Goſpel made the ſame Promiſes to Repentance, that he has to innocence and continued Obedience: But let no Man deceive himſelf by a fatal Errour: The Repentance to which our Saviour has made ſuch large Promiſes, is not the *late* Repentance of a *Chriſtian*, but the *timely* Repentance of a *Jew* or a *Heathen* at his Converſion to Chriſtianity; and is therefore the *very ſame*, and *no other* than *Baptiſm* it ſelf. Indeed if a Chriſtian by an unhappy Education be brought up in Sin, and habituated to Wickedneſs; when-ever he comes by the Power of God's Word and the Influence of his Holy Spirit, to be convinced of the evil of his Ways and of the neceſſity of Religion, he is then in the ſame ſtate that a Heathen Convert is ſuppoſed to be at his Baptiſm, and the ſame Promiſes are made to them both: But when a Chriſtian, who has a clear Knowledge of his Duty, does notwithſtanding *that*, continue wilfully all his Life in Sins, our Saviour is ſo far from aſſuring him that God and Angels will rejoyce at his Converſion, if when he grows old he leaves of ſinning, becauſe he can ſin no more, that he has no where promiſed that ſuch a Repentance ſhall be accepted *at all*. We muſt therefore *ſo* break off our Sins by Repentance, as to attain the Habits of the contrary Vertues, and to *live* in them. Such a Repentance as this, our Saviour will accept; and he that after ſuch a Repentance lives conſtantly Virtuous, ſhall certainly be eſteemed in the ſight of God, as if he had always been innocent: but without the evidence of ſuch a Life of Vertue and renewed Obedience, how far ſoever the Mercy of *God* may poſſibly extend it ſelf, *We* can never have *any aſſurance* that our Repentance will be accepted.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Baptiſm of Infants.

1. AS thoſe who by the Preaching of the Apoſtles and their Succeſſors had been converted from Judaiſm or Gentiliſm to Chriſtianity, were baptized *at riper Years*, upon their publickly profeſſing their *Faith* and their *Repentance*; ſo thoſe who were born of Chriſtian Parents, and deſigned to be educated in the Chriſtian Religion, have by the general Practice of the Chriſtian Church been baptized *in their Infancy*, upon Promiſe made by *Sureties*, that they ſhould be inſtructed in the *Faith* and in the *Obedience* of the Goſpel.

2. And that Infants are *rightly* ſo admitted to this Ordinance, (beſides the almoſt general conſent and practice of the Chriſtian Church,) I ſhall uſe but this *One* Argument to demonſtrate. Thoſe who are fit to be admitted into the Kingdom of Chriſt *in Heaven*, (as our Saviour himſelf pronounces Infants to be, *Mar.* 10. 14, 15.) are certainly qualified to be received as Members of his *Church on Earth*. The Qualifications which fit Men for both, are *Repentance* and *Faith*: Now tho' Infants have not *Repentance*, yet they have *Innocence*, which is better than Repentance, and which makes them that they need it not: For if thoſe who have been the moſt enormous Sinners, are yet by their Repentance qualified for Baptiſm; how much more are Infants, who have never ſinned, fitted for it by their *Innocence?* And though Infants have not, and cannot have actual *Faith*, yet they are *Sanctified* by being born of *Believing* Parents, they are already *in ſome ſenſe* within the Limits of the Church and of the Covenant of Promiſe, and are ready without Prejudice to be inſtructed in the *Truth* of the Goſpel, and in the *Obedience* thereof.

3. Infants therefore are rightly admitted to *Baptiſm*, and thereby to the *Privileges* appropriated by Chriſt to the Members of his Church. But becauſe Baptiſm is a Covenant, wherein there is as well a Promiſe made on the part of the Perſon baptized, *of certain Duties to be performed*, as one on God's part, *of certain Graces and Privileges*

alleges to be conferred; and becauſe Infants are not capable of making any *Promiſe* immediately by themſelves; it has therefore been the Wiſdom of the Church to appoint certain *Sureties*, who ſhould promiſe *in the Name* of the Child, what *it ſelf* ſhould afterwards be obliged to perform, *i. e.* who ſhould undertake to ſee it *inſtructed* in the Nature and Obligation of thoſe Duties, which upon account of its *being a Member of the Church of Chriſt*, it would *at Years of Diſcretion be bound to perform.*

CHAP. VI.

Of the Duty of God-Fathers and God-Mothers.

1. THat therefore which the *Sureties* undertake for a Child at its Baptiſm, is briefly this: *That* it ſhall be taught all the Articles of the *Chriſtian Faith*, with the reaſonableneſs of their *Belief*; that it ſhall be inſtructed in all the Duties of the *Chriſtian Life*, with the neceſſity of their *Practice*; and *that* it ſhall be minded in convenient time to make publick Declaration of its being hearty in this *Belief*, and to enter into a renewed Engagement to continue conſtant in this *Practice*. They promiſe *that* it ſhall be taught to *Believe in one God the Father Almighty*, &c. and *in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord*, &c. and *in the Holy Ghoſt, the Holy Catholick Church*, &c. They promiſe *that* it ſhall be inſtructed, *to renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World*, and *all the ſinful Luſts of the Fleſh*, i. e. that it ſhall be taught to live *Soberly*, *Righteouſly* and *Godly*, in this preſent World: And they promiſe, *that* it ſhall in fit ſeaſon be brought to declare ſolemnly, in the preſence of God and of the whole Congregation, its *firmneſs* in the *Faith* of theſe *Articles of Religion*, and its Reſolution to continue in the *Obedience* of theſe *Commands*.

2. This is what the God-fathers or God-mothers promiſe for a Child at its Baptiſm; This they promiſe ſolemnly in *the preſence of God*, and in *the Face of the Congregation*: And is it a light thing to enter into ſuch a Promiſe ſolemnly *before God and his Church*? I doubt not but whoſoever conſiders the matter ſeriouſly, will hardly find *any Duty* of *greater Importance*, or *any Promiſe* of more *ſolemn Obligation*:

on: yet is there no *Duty* more *generally* and more *ſhamefully* neglected, nor any *Promiſe* more lightly regarded.

3. 'Tis True, the Education of a Child is not wholly committed to the Care of thoſe who are its *Sureties* in Baptiſm, but firſt and principally to the *Parents* themſelves: But undoubtedly *they* are bound to be *Aſſiſtants*; and if the *Parents* either thro' Wickedneſs neglect to inſtruct it, or by Death are taken away from it, the Sureties muſt look upon this Care as chiefly devolved upon *Them*, and of which they muſt give a ſtrict Account.

4. 'Tis not therefore a ſlight and trivial matter, to be *Sureties* for Children in Baptiſm; 'tis not enough barely to make Profeſſion of our Faith in their Name at the *Font*; but we are bound *afterward* to perform conſcientiouſly, what we *there* ſolemnly promiſed for them before God and his Church, as a Duty wherein *their Souls* and *our own*, and the *welfare of the Church of Chriſt*, are highly concerned. *Tertullian* thought it a great Objection againſt the uſe of Infant-Baptiſm, that the Sureties were there obliged to promiſe, what they were not ſure they ſhould live to perform, and what, if they did live, they could not be ſure they ſhould be able to perſwade the baptized Perſon to take upon himſelf: He never once thought that ſo great a Truſt might be *wilfully* betrayed, or ſo ſolemn a promiſe *careleſly* neglected; which would have been a much ſtronger Objection. What would he have ſaid, if he had lived in theſe times, wherein nothing is more common, than for Men to take upon themſelves this great Charge, without ever deſigning to think more of it?

5. I doubt not but the notorious neglect of this important Duty, is one great cauſe of the ſhameleſs Wickedneſs of our preſent Age. For while *Parents* and *Sureties* are careleſs to inſtruct Children in the Nature and Obligation of their Baptiſmal Vow, vicious Inclinations prevail upon them and inſenſibly grow into Vicious Habits, before they come to a perfect Knowledge of the *Neceſſity* and *Excellency* of *Religion*, of the *Extent* and *Obligation* of their *Duty*, and of the *Greatneſs* and *Certainty* of the *Happineſs* annexed to it. Whereas were *Sureties*, according to their ſolemn Promiſe made *to God and his Church*, conſcientiouſly careful to ſee that thoſe for whom they have *Undertaken*, be timely and diligently inſtructed; Religion would

would have the firſt Poſſeſſion of innocent and unprejudiced Minds; Children would, for the moſt part, though differently according to their different Tempers, be early wrought upon to admire the *Beauty* and the *Pleaſure* of Virtue; to thirſt after the *Love* of *God* and the *Happineſs* of *Heaven*; and would be brought to *Confirmation*, with a deep *Senſe* and *Conviction* of their Duty, with an earneſt *deſire* of *profeſſing* the *reality of their Faith* and *renewing* their *Promiſes of Obedience*, and with a full Reſolution of living ſuitably to that *Profeſſion* and thoſe renewed *Promiſes*, the remaining part of their Lives.

Eſſay the Second.

Of CONFIRMATION.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature, Deſign and Uſe of Confirmation.

THAT there is a certain Period of time, *at* which every Man that *is* truly Religious, *began* to be ſo, and from which the beginning of his Religious Life might truly be dated, is evident: But of what uſe the *Knowing* and *Fixing* this Period in a Man's own Mind, may be, is generally very little conſidered: For whilſt ſome have *groundleſly* aſſerted, that there is a certain Time of every good Man's Converſion, after which it is impoſſible for him to fall away into a ſtate of Wickedneſs; and whilſt others have weakly imagined, that there is a certain Time of Converſion, after which, though a Man does fall into great Wickedneſſes, yet he cannot fall finally from a State of Grace; moſt others have thought that there is little or no uſe of inquiring *at all* into the exact time when the Religious Life begins; or if there were, that it is hardly poſſible for a Man to Fix and Determine it, ſince Men generally become Religious, not by a *ſudden Converſion*, but by a *gradual Progreſs*. But though it be indeed true, that Men generally become Religious, not at once, but by degrees; yet may a Man nevertheleſs certainly Fix to himſelf the Period, from whence to date the beginning of

of his *Religious Life*: For if his Progreſs has been only from a more *imperfect State of Virtue*, (which conſiſts in a conſtant ſincere endeavour to obey all the Commandments of God, but accompanied with many Frailties, Inadvertencies and Suprizes,) to a *more perfect and uniform practice of Holineſs*; he has been all along in the Courſe of a Religious Life: But if his Progreſs has been from a *Courſe* of *known* and *wilful* Sin, to a *Victory* or *Conqueſt* over his Luſts and Temptations; he muſt reckon his Religious Life from no longer a time, (notwithſtanding any pious Intervals and Struglings which he may have had with his Habitual Temptations,) than from that Period ſince which he has never fallen into any *known* and *groſs* Sin. And the *Uſes* of a Man's fixing within himſelf ſuch a Period, would be *that more aſſured and ſettled Peace of Conſcience*, which would ariſe from the diſtinct and clear View of a well examined courſe of paſt Holineſs; *that effectual bar againſt falling into the Act of any known Sin*, which would be put by a Man's conſidering, that by ſuch an Act he muſt loſe all the Comfort of his paſt Virtue, and be forced to begin his Religious Life again from a new Period; And above all, *that mighty dread of going on in a circle of Sinning and Repenting, Repenting and Sinning*; into which Men would be rouzed, by being brought to underſtand clearly, that ſuch a courſe is no part of a Religious Life *at all*.

2. Now this Period, from which I ſuppoſe a Chriſtian to begin his Religious Life, muſt be either *Baptiſm*, *Confirmation* or *Repentance*. In thoſe who are converted from the Profeſſion of any other Religion to that of Chriſtianity, the Period from whence *their* Religious Life ought to begin, is *Baptiſm*: And the Principal cauſe of that ſtrict Piety, for which the Primitive Chriſtians are ſo deſervedly Eminent, ſeems to be that great rigour with which they inſiſted upon Mens living in a conſtant courſe of Piety from the time of their entring into this ſolemn Covenant. In thoſe who have been educated from their Infancy in the Chriſtian Religion, the Period from whence *their* Religious Life ought to be dated, is *Confirmation*; the time from their Baptiſm being only their *Preparation*, or *time of Inſtruction*. But then for thoſe who have neglected this great and ſolemn Opportunity, or have ſince fallen into any

any great and wilful Sins; the only remaining time from whence *their* Religious Life can be reckoned, is *Repentance*, i. e. the Time ſince which they have ſo perfectly had the Conqueſt over all their Temptations, as not to have been ſeduced by them any more, into any *groſs* or *wilful* Sin. Of *Baptiſm* I have already ſpoken in the *former* Eſſay; of *Confirmation* I ſhall treat in this; of *Repentance* in the *next*.

3. In the Primitive Church, thoſe who upon Profeſſion of their Faith and Repentance were by *Baptiſm* admitted into the Church of Chriſt, had this their Admiſſion *compleated* or *perfected* afterwards, by the *Impoſition of Hands*. When the Samaritans *had received the Word of God*, and many of them *were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, only the Holy Ghoſt was *as yet fallen upon none of them*, we find that two of the Apoſtles were ſent to *lay their Hands on them*, and then *they received the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts 8. 17. This was the conſtant practice of the Apoſtles, to confirm Men after *Baptiſm* by *the Impoſition of Hands*: which two things are therefore laid down *together* among the Principles or Foundations of the Doctrine of Chriſt, *Heb.* 6. 2. and were accordingly practiced *jointly* by the Church in ſucceeding Ages. *This Cuſtom* (ſaith St. *Cyprian*) *is alſo deſcended to us, that they who are baptized be brought by the Rulers of the Church, and by our* Prayer *and the Impoſition of Hands, may obtain the Holy Ghoſt, and be conſummated with the Seal of the Lord.* And *Tertullian*, *After Baptiſm the Hand is impoſed, by Bleſſing calling down and inviting the Holy Spirit: Then that moſt Holy Spirit willingly deſcends from the Father upon the Bodies that are cleanſed and bleſſed.*

4. But of this *Confirmation* of Perſons baptized at riper Years, which was anciently adminiſtred immediately after Baptiſm, and is therefore by many not without Reaſon look'd upon as a Part of the Ceremony of *Baptiſm it ſelf*, it is not my purpoſe to ſpeak now more largely. That which I am at this time more eſpecially to conſider, is that *Confirmation*, as it is now in uſe in the Church, whereby thoſe who have been *baptized* in their Infancy, are at Years of Diſcretion *perfected* or made *compleat* Members of the Church. And the Deſign and Uſe of *Confirming* ſuch Perſons is plainly this: Baptiſm being a Covenant wherein

wherein there are as well certain *Conditions* promiſed to be performed on the part of the Perſon Baptized, as certain Privileges aſſured to be conferred on God's part; and Infants though they be capable of being admitted to the Privileges of Members of the Church, yet not being capable of promiſing or performing any Conditions, any otherwiſe than by means of certain *Sureties*, who ingage to Inſtruct them in the Nature and Obligation of the Promiſes made in their Name at their Baptiſm; 'tis manifeſt that theſe baptized Infants, when they come to Years of Diſcretion, if they deſire to continue to be Partakers of the Privileges, which God has appropriated to the Members of his Church, they muſt be willing alſo to perform the *Conditions*, which God has indiſpenſibly required of all thoſe Members: That they may enter therefore into theſe Obligations, with the Advantage of greater *Solemnity* and *Choice*, it has moſt wiſely been inſtituted, that as ſoon as they be of Age to underſtand the Nature and the Obligation of that Promiſe, which was made in their Name at their Baptiſm, they ſhould be brought to make a publick Declaration in the preſence of God and his Church of their taking freely *upon themſelves* that Vow, and of their Reſolution to live from thenceforward conformably to the *Conditions* of that great and ſolemn Covenant; and that upon this publick Profeſſion of their Faith, and moſt ſolemn Purpoſes of Obedience, they ſhould by *Impoſition of Hands* have the great Privileges of Baptiſm ſealed anew and ſecured to them.

5. And that this might be done the more *ſolemnly* and *effectually*, ſo as to have a laſting effect upon the Minds and Lives of Men, as the ſolemn Adminiſtration of *Baptiſm* had anciently among the Primitive Chriſtians; *it were very much to be wiſhed*, that as in thoſe Primitive Times Perſons converted to Chriſtianity were not before Baptiſm admitted as compleat Members to the Communion of the Church, but were eſteemed only as Candidates deſirous to be inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion; ſo theſe who have now been only baptized in their Infancy, ſhould before Confirmation be looked upon by others, and by themſelves too, as no other than *Catechumens: It were to be wiſhed*, that no one might be admitted to the *Communion*, before he were confirmed; and that no one might

might be admitted to *Confirmation*, before he had attained a perfect Knowledge of the extent and obligation of all the Duties of Religion, and given ſufficient evidence of his Reſolution to live ſuitably to that Knowledge: *It were to be wiſhed*, that as in the Primitive Church there were certain ſolemn Times appointed for Baptiſm, as *Eaſter* and *Whitſontide*, at which thoſe who were before prepared by a regular courſe of Catechizing, were admitted with great ſolemnity into the compleat Communion of the Church; ſo there were now ſuch ſolemn ſeaſons appointed, againſt which Miniſters of particular Pariſhes ſhould for ſome time before-hand dilligently inſtruct and prepare thoſe, who were of Age to be preſented to the Biſhop to be confirmed: And above all, *it were to be wiſhed*, that the whole Proceſs might be performed with ſo much *Reverence* and *Solemnity*, that all the Perſons confirmed might underſtand and be convinced, that they came now to have all the *Privileges*, which God hath Promiſed to the Members of his Church, *ſealed* and *aſſured* to them; that they now received the *Aſſiſtance* of the *Holy Spirit*, to enable them effectuallly to perform their Duty; and that they now ſolemnly undertook *for themſelves* before God and the Church, what their *Sureties* promiſed for them before at Baptiſm, to Live from henceforward in all *Holineſs* and *Purity*, and in conſtant *Obedience* to all the Commands of God, the remaining part of their Lives.

6. Were this excellent *Inſtitution* thus ſolemnly and religiouſly obſerved, exceeding great would be the effects which we might juſtly hope to ſee produced by the uſe of it. The Effect that the *Impoſition* of the Apoſtles *Hands* had upon the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, was no leſs than the induing them with thoſe extraordinary Gifts of *Speaking with Tongues*, *Working Miracles*, and the like: And though theſe mighty Operations of the Spirit did afterward by degrees ceaſe; yet the conſtant *Influence of the Holy Ghoſt*, and the *Bleſſing of God* conferred by the Impoſition of Hands, did in all ſucceding Ages expreſs and ſhew forth it ſelf in great and very remarkable Effects: It filled Men with Spiritual and Internal Strength; it indued them with *Courage* and *Wiſdom* and *Fortitude*, to *confeſs boldly* the Faith of Chriſt Crucified, and to promote zealouſly the Service of the Church; it wrought in

their Minds an Ardent Love of God, and a continual Joy in the Holy Ghoſt; a perfect Purity of Heart, and Contempt of all Worldly Enjoyments; a boundleſs *Charity* towards all Mankind, and an infinite *deſire of doing good* in their Generation. And were Young Perſons taught *Now* to receive Confirmation with the ſame *Preparation*, with the ſame *Reverence*, and with the ſame *Expectations*, that they did in the Primitive Times; we might yet expect, that God would annex the ſame *inward Bleſſings*, to the Uſe of the ſame *external Means*. Were none eſteemed *perfect Chriſtians*, or looked upon as *compleat Members* of the Church before Confirmation; Parents and Sureties would be obliged to *inſtruct* and *prepare* Children in order to be Confirmed; and we ſhould not ſee the generality of Men eſteeming themſelves *perfect Chriſtians*, and *Faithful Members* of the Church, without ever knowing *how*, or upon what *Conditions* they were admitted into it. Were none admitted to Confirmation, who had not firſt paſſed through ſuch a regular courſe of Catechizing, as to underſtand perfectly the *Extent* of their Duty, and their *Obligation* to perform it; this would breed in Young Perſons a great *Reverence* and *Eſteem* for Religion, and a great *Zeal* in preparing themſelves, that they might be thought worthy to be admitted to the compleat *Communion* of the Church, and to the *Participation* of its higher Myſteries: By this means Children would be fully and diſtinctly inſtructed in the nature and deſign of Religion, as ſoon as they came to the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and we ſhould not ſee Men live all their Lives in the *Communion* of the Church, and in the *Participation of its Sacraments*, without ever underſtanding the very *firſt Principles* of the Doctrine of Chriſt, or what it was that they promiſed at Baptiſm: By this means that *groſs Ignorance*, in which ſo many thouſand Chriſtians live and die, would in great Meaſure be prevented; and we ſhould not ſee Children for want of Inſtruction ſo ſoon poſſeſſed and corrupted by *Vice*, as to *Lie* and *Swear*, to be *Diſobedient* and *Ill-natur'd*, to be *Vain* and *Idle* in that tender Age, wherein they might as eaſily be formed to all the contrary *Virtues* with the ſame Advantage of *Prejudice* and *firſt Poſſeſſion*. Were none received to Confirmation, who did not expreſs a ſincere Reſolution to live from thenceforward according

according to the *Purity* and the *Equity* of the Goſpel in all Holineſs and Godly Converſation; or who did not with *free Choice* and a *zealous Diſpoſition* of Mind deſire to take upon themſelves their *Baptiſmal Vow*, and to make publick Profeſſion of their *Faith* and *Obedience* in the preſence of God and his whole Church; this would give a mighty *Reputation* to Religion and Virtue; this would prevent that *Coldneſs* and *Deadneſs* in Religion, which proceeds from Mens taking up the Profeſſion of it in courſe, without due Preparation and Diſpoſition of Mind; this would make Men earneſt and ſerious in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and ſolicitous not to contradict their Profeſſion by their Lives: Such a *ſolemn Renunciation* of the World, the Fleſh and the Devil; ſuch a *Vow* ſolemnly *confirmed* and *ratified* by our Perſonal Proteſtation in the preſence of God, and in the ſight of the Congregation, could not but be a mighty Bridle to reſtrain Men from Sin, and a mighty Spur to provoke Men to Good Works: The Fear of God and the Shame of Men, in whoſe preſence ſo ſacred an Obligation was entered into, could not but be of great force to bind Men to live worthy of this great *Vocation*, that they might anſwer the expectation of *God* and his *Church*, and not become a blemiſh and diſhonour to their *Religion*. Laſtly, Were none admitted to Confirmation, without being firſt fully perſwaded, that they came now to receive the Aſſiſtance of the *Holy Ghoſt*, which ſhould from henceforward continue with them, to inable them to *perform* all the *Commands of God*, and to *reſiſt and overcome* all the *Temptations* of the Enemy; we might have reaſon to hope, that as in the *Primitive Times*, ſo *Now* alſo theſe *External Ordinances* would be accompanied with ſuch plentiful Effuſions of *inward and ſanctifying Grace*, as would have a viſible effect in the Lives and Manners of Men: The time was when the Profeſſors of True Religion could challenge the Unbelieving World to give them a *Luſtful*, *Malicious*, *Paſſionate*, *Revengeful* Man, and they would by the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm and Confirmation, transform him into the *Pureſt*, the *Meekeſt*, and the *Gentleſt* Spirit upon Earth; and ſince God has promiſed to be always with the Church by his Spirit even unto the end of the World, I ſee no Reaſon why Confirmation of Baptized Perſons, if it were celebrated by us, with the

ſame Preparation and Reverence as it was among the Antients, might not be as effectual *Now* to *Confirm Men in Virtue* as it was *Then* to *Transform them from Vice*; and have as proportionably great an effect upon the following part of *our* Lives, as it had upon *theirs*. By *theſe means* the Church would be again reſtored to its Antient Regular Conſtitution: By *theſe means* many perplexing Scruples about the Worthy Receiving the Holy Communion, would in great meaſure be removed; no one being capable of being admitted to that Holy Sacrament, without having been firſt Confirmed; and no one being capable of being Confirmed, without having firſt paſſed through ſuch Preparation, as would fit him for the Communion: Laſtly, By *theſe means*, if any one after Confirmation lapſed into the practice of any great and notorious Sin, a fair opportunity would offer it ſelf of reſtoring ſome degreee of that Antient Diſcipline, the want of which is ſo juſtly lamented by the Church; this Solemn Preparation, by which I ſuppoſe Perſons fitted for Confirmation, being the moſt likely thing in the World to work in Mens Minds ſuch a dread of Sins to be committed afterwards, as would diſpoſe them to ſubmit to, and to profit under Diſcipline.

7. Theſe are the exceeding great Benefits, which would ariſe from ſuch a Solemn and Religious Uſe of *Confirmation*: But till this excellent Inſtitution can be reſtored to its Antient Solemnity and Reverence; which as it is much to be *wiſhed*, ſo in the preſent degeneracy and corruption of Manners it is hardly to be *hoped*, all that can be done is earneſtly to exhort thoſe who are in any capacity intruſted with the Inſtruction of Children, that they be careful for the *Honour of God*, and for the *Welfare of his Church*, to teach them to *Love God and Religion* with their firſt Love; to improve in them thoſe Natural Principles of *Juſtice* and *Truth*, *Honeſty* and *Thankfulneſs*, *Simplicity* and *Obedience*, which God hath planted in their very Creation; to teach them to reſiſt the *Prejudices* and *firſt Inſinuations* of Vice, and to be afraid of a *Sin* as of *Death*; to fill their Minds with great and honourable Thoughts of the *Privileges* of being made *Members* of *Chriſt*, *Children* of *God*, and *Heirs* of *Heaven*; to inſtruct them fully in the *Extent* and *Obligation* of all the *Duties* of the Chriſtian Life, which in their Baptiſm they engaged to perform; and when they be

be thus Qualified, to bring them with *Underſtanding* and *Reſolution*, with *Deſire* and *Zeal*, to receive at *Confirmation* the *Conſummation of Baptiſmal Grace*, and a joyful *Aſſurance of Glory and Immortality*, if they ſhall perſevere in their Faith and their Obedience to the end.

8. My Deſign in the following Eſſay, is not to enter into any *Queſtion* of *Diſpute*, but only to lay down ſome *brief* and *practical Directions*, by which one that *deſigns to be Confirmed*, (whom I always ſuppoſe of Age to underſtand the whole Doctrine of Religion,) or one that is already *Confirmed*, and is ſincerely deſirous to lead a Religious Life, may attain to that *Primitive Holineſs* and that *Perfection of Virtue*, which becomes the *Truth* and the *Purity* of the Goſpel.

CHAP. II.

What is to be done before *Confirmation. Of Faith; of the Neceſſity of Religion; of the Neceſſity of Revelation; of the Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion; and of Conſideration.*

1. FIrſt then, in order to receive Confirmation, or to begin the great Work of Religion, with due preparation of Mind, *Endeavour before all things to attain a real and firm Belief of the great Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion.* This is the only Foundation, that will be able to ſupport the Deſign of a truly Religious Life. If we do really and firmly believe, the *Being* and the *Providence* of God; if we be indeed convinced that the *Chriſtian Religion* is a *Revelation* of the Divine Will; if we be in earneſt perſuaded, that there will certainly come a Day of *Retribution*, wherein every Man ſhall receive according to that he has done, whether it be Good or Evil; this is a *Faith*, which *will aſſuredly overcome the World*; this is a *Belief*, which will certainly baffle all the Temptations of Sin and Satan; this will make all the *Glories* of the World ſeem *mean*, and all the *Pleaſures* of Senſe *inſipid*; in a word, this will inſpire Men with ſuch a vigorous Zeal as will make them not only with *Eaſe* and *Contentment*, but with a *mighty Pleaſure* Sacrifice all Earthly Enjoyments to the doing the *greateſt Good* here, and obtaining the *greateſt Happineſs* hereafter. But if we enter upon the Pro-

feſſion of Religion raſhly and inconſiderately, more for *Form and Cuſtom* than upon any mature *Deliberation and Conviction of Mind*, it is not poſſible we ſhould perſevere in well-doing with Reſolution and Patience: The Cares of the World and the Deceitfulneſs of Riches, the Solicitations of Pleaſure and the Luſts of other things, will certainly prevail over us, and ſeduce us into Sin. Nothing but a *firm Faith*, grounded upon an impartial View and a deep Conſideration of things, can poſſibly carry a Man through the *Difficulties* and *Diſcouragements* of a Religious Life: But he that begins to build upon this Foundation, and lays down his firſt Princip'es of *Faith* immovable as a Rock, will be able to ſurmount all Difficulties with *Bravery* and *Conſtancy*, and will attain the end of his Hopes with *Triumph* and *Joy*.

2. The true Reaſon why ſo great a number of thoſe who make Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, are either wicked and licentious, or at leaſt cold and indifferent in Matters of Religion, is plainly this, That they do not *in earneſt* believe, as they pretend and profeſs to do, the great Articles of Religion: They *in courſe* profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, without having ever conſidered what Chriſtianity is, and *therefore* it has little or no Influence upon their Lives and Actions. For did Men indeed as firmly believe the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion, as the Character they are willing to bear in the World obliges them to pretend they do, it would be in a manner as ſtrange to find a Man whoſe *Actions* ſhould give his *Words* the Lye, and his *Life* be unſuitable to his *Profeſſion*, as to hear one diſputing whether there were a Hell or no, while he were actually tormented in the Flames thereof. For though *Faith* has not the Evidence of *Senſe*, as indeed it is impoſſible it ſhould, yet if it be well grounded, it could not but have in good meaſure the ſame Effect upon the Lives of Men, as the Evidence of Senſe would have. When a *Temporal Prince* declares, that who-ever be found guilty of ſuch or ſuch Crimes, ſhall certainly undergo this or that particular Puniſhment, ſuch a Declaration has generally the ſame Influence upon all the Subjects concerned, as if they ſaw the Puniſhment already actually inflicted upon the Criminals: When therefore the ſupreme Governour of the World declares to Mankind his Will, which is

their

their Law and Rule of Life, and inforces the Obligation of that Law by ſuch Threats and Promiſes, as the Scripture, which is that Declaration of his Will, contains; If theſe Threats and Promiſes of the *Almighty* have not the ſame Influence upon the Hearts and Lives of Men, as thoſe of an *earthly Prince* in other Caſes generally have, is it not evident either that Men do not in earneſt believe that theſe Threats and Promiſes are indeed the Declaration of his Will, or elſe that they imagine that though he now ſo earneſtly preſſes, and ſeems ſo ſeverely to exact Obedience to his Laws, yet at laſt he will not puniſh the Contempt of them? If this be not the caſe, how comes the Chriſtian Religion to have loſt that Efficacy in reforming the Lives and Manners of Men, for which it was once ſo eminent even amongſt its Enemies themſelves? If we do indeed believe the ſame Goſpel, and live under the Power of the ſame Religion, that the *Primitive Chriſtians* did; how comes that Religion not to have the ſame Influence upon *our* Lives and Actions, that it had upon *theirs?* Can we hear Men dayly profane the Sacred Name of God with impious and horrid Oaths; and yet think they believe there *is* a God jealous of his Honour, and that will avenge himſelf on ſuch a Nation as this? Can we ſee Men cheat and cozen, deſtroy and prey upon one another, without the leaſt ſcruple or appearance of remorſe; and yet think they believe the *Truth* of the Chriſtian Religion, and the *Severity* thereof? In a word, can we ſee Men dally with Eternity, and for the ſake of a few *empty and momentary Gratifications*, hazard their Everlaſting Welfare? Can we think it poſſible, I ſay, that rational Creatures ſhould act with ſo prodigious a Careleſneſs, who yet believe not that the Scene of this World ſhall be ſhut up in Everlaſting Oblivion, but that there will come a Day wherein they muſt give Account for their Works, and be accordingly happy or miſerable for ever? No certainly; whatever Pretences Men may make to deceive others, and perhaps in ſome meaſure *themſelves* too, there muſt lurk ſome ſecret Seeds of Infidelity in the Heart of every wicked Man; and the true Reaſon why this *World* has ſo much the Aſcendant over the Lives of Chriſtians, muſt be their not having a firm Belief of the Glories of the other. Whoever therefore will *ſo enter* into a Religious courſe of Life, as to be

able to perſevere in well-doing to the end; who-ever will *ſo lay the Foundation*, as to be able to *finiſh*; muſt before all things attain a firm and ſettled *Belief* of the great Truths of Religion: And as *without this Ground-work*, it is not poſſible he ſhould ever be reſolute enough, to *overcome* the Enemies of his Religion and Happineſs, ſo *with it*, it is not poſſible he ſhould ever *be overcome* by them. He that has a firm and ſteady Belief of the Greatneſs and Excellency of thoſe Riches, which *neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt*, and to which *Thieves cannot break thro' to ſteal*, will never be ſo dazled with the glittering of Gold, as to let it ſteal away his Heart, and Affections: He that has a great and noble Idea of the *Glory which ſhall be revealed hereafter*, will never be enticed to ſquander away thoſe Talents which God has given him, only in appearing ſplendid and great *here*: He that hath a ſtrong and vigorous expectation of thoſe Pleaſures which God hath prepared for them that love him, *which Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have* they *entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*, 1 Cor. 2. 9. will never be perſuaded to give himſelf up to the voluptuouſneſs and ſenſuality of a Beaſt: In a word, he that is *full of Faith*, and can look with aſſurance beyond things *Temporal* to thoſe which are *Eternal*, has left no room in himſelf where the Devil can enter with his Suggeſtions, but is fortified on all ſides againſt all Temptations.

3. Now to attain ſuch a *Faith* as this, not ſlight and ſuperficial, but *firm* and *well-grounded*, and *immovable* againſt all Aſſaults, a Man ought to proceed by theſe ſteps. Firſt, he muſt by ſerious Conſideration work in his own Mind a full and perfect Conviction of the *Being of God*, and of the *Excellency of his Attributes*: From thence he muſt collect *the certainty of God's Providence over Men*, and the *Obligation of Mens Duty towards God*: From hence will follow the *neceſſity of Religion here*, and the *certainty of the Reward of Vertue hereafter*: After this, he muſt conſider the *neceſſity of a Divine Revelation to eſtabliſh true Religion*, and the *Proofs which evidence the Chriſtian Inſtitution to be ſuch a Revelation*: And above all, he muſt *fix theſe Things ſtrongly, and imprint them on his Mind, by deep and conſtant Meditations*,

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4. *He that cometh to God, muſt* in the firſt place *believe that he Is*, i. e. he muſt not only by a *ſlight* and *careleſs* aſſent go along *inconſiderately*, with the common Opinion, but he muſt form in his Mind a *conſiderate* and *rational*, a *ſtrong* and *vigorous Perſuaſion* of the Being of God. Take a view of this *great* and *glorious* Fabrick of the World; conſider the *ſtupendous Magnitude* and the *exquiſite Order* of its Parts; conſider the numberleſs Inſtances of *Infinite Power* and *unfathomable Wiſdom*, which appear in this our Spot of Earth; conſider the *exquiſite Artifice* which diſcovers it ſelf in the Structure of the *Body* of Man, and the *inconceivable Subtilty* of the Operations of his *Mind*. Conſider at the ſame time how *frail*, and *depending*, and *corruptible* all theſe things are; how *weak* and *unable* even Man, the nob'eſt part of the viſible World, is, to be the Cauſe, or ſo much as the Preſerver either of himſelf or any thing elſe: And this will raiſe in the Mind ſuch a powerful Conviction of the Being of God, as will be a laſting and immovable Foundation, on which to build a rational and conſiderate Deſign of Religion.

5. To one that is thus perſuaded of the Being of God, it will be eaſie to conclude, That as that Supreme Being, from whom all other Things received their *Original*, muſt himſelf be *Eternal*; as he, from whom all the *Powers* of all Things that exiſt, are derived, muſt himſelf be *All-powerful*; and as he, by whoſe Eſtabliſhment all things in all Places were made to move in ſuch *wiſe* and *wonderful* Order, as far exceeds the Capacity of the wiſeſt of Men to comprehend, muſt himſelf be *All-knowing and All-wiſe*: So it cannot be, but that he who is *All-knowing*, *All-powerful* and *All-wiſe*; who *ſees* thro' all things at one view, and can *effect* all things with the ſame eaſe that he can *will* them, muſt *govern*, *direct* and *manage* all things by an *Over-ruling Providence*: And becauſe his *Power* is ſo great as not poſſibly to be *compelled*, and his *Wiſdom* ſo perfect as not poſſibly to be *ſeduced* to do any thing contrary to thoſe Eternal Rules, which the immutable *Law of the Divine Nature* and the unalterable *Conſtitution and Relation of Things* has fixed; that therefore this his Government of the World muſt be *Juſt* and *Equitable*, according to the niceſt and exacteſt Meaſures, of Infinite *Goodneſs*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Truth*.

6. From this Notion of the *Being*, of the *Attributes* and of the *Providence* of God, moſt evidently follows, the *Neceſſity of Religion*. For if God be a Being of Infinite *Power*, *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom*; 'tis manifeſt he is to be *Reverenced*, to be *Honoured*, and to be *Feared*: If he concerns himſelf with the *Government* of his Creatures, and imploys theſe Infinite Perfections in *Ruling* and *Ordering* the World; 'tis manifeſt he is to be *Worſhipped*, *Prayed to*, and *Adored*: And if this his Government of the World be regulated by the exacteſt Meaſures of Infinite *Goodneſs*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Truth*; 'tis manifeſt he is to be *Loved*, to be *Praiſed*, and to be *Imitated*.

7. And becauſe it cannot be, but that a *juſt*, and *true* and *good* Being, whoſe *Nature* and whoſe *Happineſs* conſiſts in the *Perfection* and in the *Exerciſe* of theſe Attributes, muſt be pleaſed with thoſe Creatures, who love to imitate his *Juſtice*, his *Goodneſs* and his *Truth*; therefore there muſt of neceſſity be a Reward laid up in ſtore for Vertue; and thoſe whoſe delight it has been to conform themſelves to the likeneſs of the *Divine Nature*, ſhall certainly be admitted to partake in ſome degree of the *Divine Happineſs*. Wherefore if this Reward be not given to Vertue in this preſent Life; if the good things of this World be diſtributed not only promiſcuouſly, but even generally to the diſadvantage of the Virtuous, and to the advantage of thoſe who are Enemies of God and Haters of his Religion; it follows, that if a *righteous and good* God has any regard to *Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs*, there muſt be a future State, wherein Rewards and Puniſhments ſhall be diſpenced impartially to Vertue and Vice.

8. Thus *as certain* as is our Knowledge of the Being of God and of the Conſtitution of Things, *ſo certain* may we be of the Obligation of Religion, and of the Reward of Vertue. Yet by Experience it hath been found, that theſe Conſiderations, however in themſelves ſtrong and concluding, have notwithſtanding been inſufficient ſo to *convince Mens Judgments* and *Over-rule their Paſſions*, as to keep them conſtant in the *Knowledge* and in the *Practice* of their Duty. The greateſt part of the Gentile World, before the appearance of the Glorious Light of the Goſpel, were an amazing Inſtance of this. They quickly fell from the Worſhip of the *true God*, to the Worſhip of *Idols* and

and *impure Spirits*; and were thereupon given up to a reprobate Mind, *to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*, Ep. 4. 19. They were by degrees intangled in all manner of wicked Practices, till their very *Mind and Conſcience was defiled*, Tit. 1. 15. and ſo accuſtom'd themſelves to *run into all exceſs of Riot*, that even their moſt *ſacred and religious Performances* became at length the very *extremeſt Abominations*. And though there always were among them ſome *Philoſophers*, who ſtood up for the Cauſe of Vertue and true Religion; yet they never were able to keep together any conſiderable number of Men, who could *agree* among themſelves about the *Notion* of the Truth, and *perſevere* in the *practice of it*. Even *that Happineſs it ſelf*, which was to be the ultimate end of all Humane Actions, they were ſo little ſettled in their Apprehenſions about, that St. *Auſtin* ſomewhere out of *Varro* reckons up no leſs than 280 Opinions concerning the *chief Good*. The *means to attain this Happineſs*, namely the great Rules of Morality, they agreed indeed pretty well in; but their *Underſtandings* they complained were ſo *dark and cloudy*, their *Wills ſo biaſſed and inclined to Evil*, their *Paſſions* ſo *outragious and rebelling againſt Reaſon*, that thoſe Rules were looked upon as hardly practicable: In a word, they confeſſed that humane Nature was ſtrangely *corrupted*; and they complained of this *Corruption* as a Diſeaſe whereof they knew not the *Cauſe*, and could not find out a ſufficient *Remedy*, ſo that the great Duties of Religion were laid down by them as Matters of *ſpeculation and diſpute* rather than *practice*, and not ſo much *urged upon the Hearts and Lives* of Men, as *propoſed to the Admiration* of thoſe, who thought them ſcarce poſſible to be effectually attained to by the generality of Men. Laſtly, The *Method, by which thoſe who have erred from the right way and have offended God, may yet again reſtore themſelves to the Favour of God and to the Hopes of Happineſs*, the Philoſophers were in a manner abſolutely ignorant of. From the Conſideration of the Goodneſs and Mercifulneſs of God, they did indeed *reaſonably* hope, that God would ſhew himſelf placable to Sinners, and might be ſome way reconciled: But what Propitiation he will accept, and in what manner this Reconciliation muſt be made, here Nature ſtops and expects with impatience the aid of ſome particular Revelation. That God will

will receive returning Sinners, and accept of Repentance inſtead of perfect Obedience, *they* cannot certainly know, to whom he has not declared that he *will* do ſo; for though this be the moſt probable and only means of Reconciliation that Nature ſuggeſts, yet whether this will be alone ſufficient, or whether he requires ſomething further before he will reſtore Men to the Priviledges they have forfeited, they cannot be ſatisfactorily aſſured. There ariſes therefore no Natural *ſufficient* Comfort to Sinners, but an endleſs and anxious ſolicitude about the means of appeaſing the Deity. Hence thoſe diverſe ways of Sacrificing and numberleſs Superſtitions, which overſpread the Face of the Heathen World, but were ſo little ſatisfactory to the wiſer part of Mankind, even in thoſe times of Darkneſs, that the Philoſophers could not ſometimes forbear declaring, That they thought thoſe Rites could avail little or nothing towards appeaſing the Wrath of a provoked God, or making their Prayers acceptable in his ſight; inſomuch that *Plato* in the Perſon of *Socrates* ſpeaks out, that ſince they knew not in what manner to apply themſelves acceptably unto God, he expected and did aſſure himſelf, that in due time ſome Perſon would be ſent from God, who ſhould declare to them his Will in that particular.

9. And now if theſe wiſeſt of Philoſophers were thus puzled about that which was their higheſt Concern, how are the *Diſputers* of our Age certain, that if themſelves had lived without the Light of the Goſpel, they ſhould have made ſuch a right uſe of their Reaſon, as to have diſcovered the Truth *exactly*, without being any way led aſide by Prejudice or Intereſt? If their Lot had been among the *Vulgar*, how are they ſure they ſhould have been ſo happy, or ſo conſiderate, as not to have been involved in that Idolatry and Superſtition, which over-ſpread the whole World? If they had joyned themſelves to the *Philoſophers*, which Sect would they have choſen to have followed, and what Book would they have reſolved upon to be the adæquate Rule of their Lives and Converſations? Or if they would have ſet up for themſelves, how are they certain they ſhould have been skilful and unprejudiced enough, to have deduced the ſeveral Branches of their Duty and applied them to the ſeveral Caſes of Life, by Argument-

gumentation and dint of Reaſon? 'Tis one thing to ſee that thoſe Rules of Life, which are before-hand plainly and particularly laid before us, are perfectly agreeable to Reaſon; and another thing to find out thoſe Rules meerly by the Light of Reaſon, without their having firſt been any otherwiſe made known. We ſee that even many of thoſe, who profeſs to govern their Lives by the *plain written Rule* of an *inſtituted and revealed Religion*, are yet moſt miſerably *ignorant* of their Duty; and how can any Man be ſure he ſhould have made ſo good Improvement of his Reaſon, as to have *underſtood it perfectly* in all its parts, without any ſuch Help? We ſee that many of thoſe, who profeſs to believe firmly that *great and everlaſting* Happineſs, whirh Chriſt has promiſed to Obedience, and that *great and eternal* Miſery which Chriſt has threatned to Diſobedience, are yet hurried away by their Luſts and Paſſions to tranſgreſs the Conditions of that Covenant, to which theſe Promiſes and theſe Threatnings are annexed; and how can any Man be ſure he ſhould be able to overcome thoſe great Temptations, if theſe mighty Motives were leſs *diſtinctly known*, or leſs *powerfully enforced*? But ſuppoſe he could, and that by ſtrength of Reaſon he could demonſtrate to himſelf theſe things with all *clearneſs and diſtinctneſs*; yet could all Men do ſo? Aſſuredly all Men are not *equally* capable of being *Philoſophers*, tho' all Men are *equally obliged* to be *Religious*. At leaſt thus much is certain, that the Rewards and Puniſhments of another World, the great Motives of Religion, cannot be ſo *powerfully inforced* to the influencing the Lives and Practice of all ſorts of Men, by one who ſhall undertake to demonſtrate the reality of them by force of Reaſon and Arguments, as by one who ſhowing ſufficient Credentials of his having been himſelf there, ſhall aſſure them of the Truth and certainty of theſe things.

10. Though therefore nothing be more evident to Reaſon, than the *Neceſſity of Religion* in general, and the *Certainty of the Reward of Virtue*; yet *becauſe* 'tis too nice and laborious a work in a matter of ſuch vaſt Importance, for Men of all Capacities to diſcover by the Light of Nature all the particular Branches of their Duty; and *becauſe* in the diſcovery of ſuch Matters, as are the great Motives of Religion, Men are apt to be more *eaſily wrought*

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upon, and more *ſtrongly affected*, by *Teſtimony* than by *Arguments*; and *becauſe* ſome things neceſſary in our preſent corrupt State, ſuch as for inſtance the *means by which a ſinner may appeaſe God after he has offended him*, cannot *certainly* be diſcovered by the Light of Nature and Reaſon at all; *therefore* there is evidently a neceſſity of ſome particular *Revelation*, which may ſupply theſe defects. And this the Heathens themſelves were ſo ſenſible of, that there never was any Principal Law-giver among them who did not pretend to receive his Laws, or at leaſt his Inſtructions for making thoſe Laws, by ſome Divine Revelation; and *Plato* in a moſt remarkable Paſſage acknowledges ſo plainly the want of ſuch a Revelation, as even to queſtion whether it would not be better that Men ſhould forbear ſacrificing wholly, till ſuch time as God ſhould diſcover to them in what manner he would have it done. 'Tis therefore *agreeable to the Natural Expectations of Men*, that God ſhould make ſome particular Revelation of his Will, which may ſupply the Defects of the Light of Nature: And that it is not *unworthy of the Wiſdom of God* to make ſuch a Revelation, is alſo evident; For can any Man ſay, that it is an unwiſe thing, for the Creator of the World to reveal to his Creatures more fully the way to Happineſs, and the means of becoming like himſelf? Can any Man ſay, that it is an unwiſe thing, for God to declare what Satisfaction he will accept for Sin, and upon what conditions he will receive returning Sinners? Can any Man ſay, that it is a thing unworthy of the Wiſdom of God, to make particular Diſcoveries of his Will to his Creatures, and to ſet before them in a clearer Light the rewards and puniſhments of a future State? This is ſo manifeſt, that nothing needs further be ſaid about it.

11. Now that the *Chriſtian* Religion *is* ſuch a particular Revelation, *actually* made by God: That the *peculiar Duties*, which *it* injoyns, are *indeed* the *expreſs Commands* of God; and the *peculiar Motives*, by which *it* inforces thoſe Duties, *things true and in reality eſtabliſhed by God*: Of this we have all the proof that the nature of the thing will bear, and that is agreeable either to the *Wiſdom of God* to *give*, or the *Reaſon of Men* to *expect*. To repreſent the Motives which are to inforce the practice of any thing, more evi-

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dently and ſtrongly, than is conſiſtent with the nature of the thing deſigned to be inforced, is *inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of an All-wiſe God*; and to expect other proof of any thing, than what the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of, is *unreaſonable in the Judgment of underſtanding Men.* The deſign then of Religion, being to make Men *Happy* by making them *Religious*; that is, to make *Happineſs* not the *Fate of Mens Nature*, but the *Reward of their Vertue*; 'tis plain, the Motives of Religion ought of neceſſity to be ſuch, as might abundantly encourage all wiſe Men to cleave inſeperably to their Duty as to their Life, and yet leave room for Men deſperately wicked and incorrigible, to avoid being forced into the Injoyment of that Happineſs, which they are not willing to purchaſe at the rate of being Religious. The Reward of everlaſting Life promiſed to Obedience, and the Puniſhment of eternal Miſery threatned to Diſobedience, are Motives in themſelves *infinitely and irreſiſtably* ſtrong: For were the Happineſs of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell openly expoſed to view, and propoſed as the immediate and preſent Conſequence of a Man's chuſing or refuſing his Duty, 'twould be as impoſſible for a Man in actual view of theſe two different States not to chooſe his Duty and refuſe the contrary, as for a heavy Body not to fall downward to the Ground. Tho' therefore the infinitely gracious and merciful God has indeed propoſed to us theſe great and moſt powerful Motives, that Men by chooſing their *Duty* might chooſe their *Life*, and become *Happy* in conſequence of their becoming *Religious*; yet hath he ſo propoſed them, inviſible at preſent and at a diſtance, that good Men might have ſome exerciſe of their Virtue by chooſing their *Duty* in order to their *Happineſs*, and that Men obſtinately impenitent might not partake of the *Happineſs*, without chooſing the *Duty* to which that *Happineſs* is annexed. Again, the Nature of a revealed Inſtitution of Religion being ſuch, that excepting *the agreeableneſs of its Doctrines to the eternal Rule of Reaſon*, the chief evidence of its being from God muſt of neceſſity depend upon the *credible Teſtimonies of Matter of Fact*; 'tis manifeſt that *that* evidence, of which ſuch Matters of Fact are capable, ought to be accounted ſufficient in the preſent caſe; and to require greater proof, than the na-

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ture of the thing will bear, is abſurd and unreaſonable.

12. That the Chriſtian Religion therefore is *indeed* a Revelation, *ſufficiently* demonſtrated to be from God, may be ſatisfactorily evidenced to a Man's own Mind by Theſe Conſiderations: That the *Duties* which it injoyns are all ſuch, as are moſt *agreeable to our Natural Notions of God*, and moſt *conducive to the happineſs and well-being of Men*: That the *Motives* by which it enforces thoſe Duties, are ſuch as are moſt *ſuitable to the excellent Wiſdom of God*, and moſt *anſwerable to the Natural expectations of Men*: That the *peculiar Circumſtances*, with which it injoyns theſe Duties, and urges theſe Motives, are ſuch as are moſt *exactly conſonant to the Light of Nature*, and moſt *wiſely perfective of it*: and, That all theſe things are proved moreover to be taught and confirmed of God, by the moſt *credible and convincing Teſtimony*, that ever was given to any matter of fact in the World.

13. In the firſt place, the *Duties* which the Chriſtian Religion injoyns, are all ſuch, as are moſt *agreeable to our natural notions of God*, and moſt *conducive to the happineſs and well-being of Men*. This is a proof, which were alone ſufficient to convince a wiſe Man of a Religion's being from God: For that Inſtitution of Religion, which requires no other Duties, than what are *perfectly agreeable to the eternal and unchangeable Law of God*, and *manifeſtly perfective of the Moral Virtue and the Happineſs of Men*, has already the Mark of God upon it, and cannot poſſibly but come from him. The *Nature and Life of God* are unchangeable, and the *Conſtitution of his Laws is unchangeable*: Whoever therefore Preaches and Inſtitutes ſuch a Religion, as leads Men to nothing elſe, but to *the Obedience of the Laws*, and to *the Imitation of the Nature and Life of God*, may without any other Teſtimonials be admitted as a Preacher of Divine Truth; and that Religion, which ſtands on ſuch a Foundation, is *of it ſelf* ſufficiently recommended, to the Belief and to the Practice of all Wiſe Men. Now that the Chriſtian Religion is ſuch an Inſtitution, is ſo plain and evident, that its greateſt Adverſaries have hardly been able to deny it: The Duties of *Love*, *Fear*, and *Adoration*, which it obliges us to render unto God, are ſo manifeſtly incumbent upon us on conſideration of the excellent Attributes of the Divine Nature, and our

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Relation to him as our Creator and Preſerver, that no Man who conſiders, can break looſe from the Obligations which our Religion lays upon him to practice theſe Duties, without denying the very Being of God, and acting contrary to the Reaſon and all the Natural Notions of his own Mind: The Duties of *Juſtice*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Truth*, which the Chriſtian Religion commands us to exerciſe towards Men, are ſo apparently reaſonable, and ſo directly conducive to the Happineſs of Mankind, that even thoſe Men who have broken through all the Bonds of Religion and the Obligations of Virtue, have yet thought it neceſſary to the preſervation of Society, and the well-being of Mankind, that the obſervation of theſe Duties ſhould be inforced by the Penalties of Humane Laws: The Duties of *Sobriety*, *Temperance* and *Contentment*, which our Religion injoyns us to practiſe in *our ſelves*, are ſo undeniably agreeable to the inward Conſtitution of Humane Nature, and ſo perfective of it, that the Principal deſign of all true Philoſophy was to recommend and ſet off theſe Duties to the beſt advantage; though, as the Philoſophers themſelves confeſſed, it never was able to work Men up to that pitch of cheerful and generous Obedience to the Rules of theſe Duties, which the Chriſtian Religion in its primitive and pureſt State was acknowledged to have done, and which if it were now believed and practiced as it then was, it muſt ſtill do: Laſtly, Even thoſe *poſitive and external Obſervances*, (ſuch as the *Sacraments*, &c.) which are Inſtituted in the Chriſtian Religion as means and aſſiſtances to keep Men ſtedfaſt in the practice of thoſe *great and moral Duties* which are *the weightier matters of the Law*, are ſo free from all appearance of Superſtition and Vanity, aad ſo wiſely fitted to the end for which they were deſign'd; that many of the Adverſaries of our Religion have yet been forced to admire the Wiſdom and the Excellency of their Inſtitution.

14. Again, The *Principal Motives* of the Chriſtian Religion, I mean the Diſcovery of a future State, and the Rewards and Puniſhments therein to be diſpenced; are things ſo *ſuitable to the excellent Wiſdom of God*, and ſo *agreeable to the unprejudiced Reaſon, to the Natural Apprehenſions and Expectations of Men*, that were their truth and reality confirmed by no other Argument or external Proof,

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yet were they ſufficient to influence the practice, and regulate the Actions of wiſe and conſiderate Men. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and ſhall ſurvive after the diſſolution of this corruptible Body, is a truth which has always been thought demonſtrable from Principles of Reaſon, and from the conſideration of the nature of the thing: That Man is a Creature capable of doing good or evil, and conſequently of giving account of his Actions, and being judged for them, is alſo evident: That therefore in a future State there ſhall be a time of Retribution, wherein every Man ſhall receive of God according to what he has done in this Life, whether it be good or evil, has been collected by the wiſer and more conſiderate part of Men among the Heathens themſelves. The *Reſurrection of the Body*, has indeed been looked upon by moſt of the Philoſophers, as a thing utterly abſurd and impoſſible: But there is nothing impoſſible in the Nature of the thing: And the Jews, who had no expreſs Revelation of that matter, did yet believe it upon a conſtant Tradition; as appears from all their Writings, and particularly from the Tranſlation of the laſt Verſe of the Book of *Job*, which according to the *Seventy* runs thus; *So* Job *died, being old and full of Days, but 'tis written, that he ſhall riſe again with thoſe whom the Lord raiſes up.*

15. Further, the *peculiar Circumſtances*, with which the Duties and the Motives of the Chriſtian Religion are inlarged and inforced, are ſuch as are moſt *exactly agreeable to the Light of Nature*, and moſt *wiſely perfective of it*. For what can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have thoſe Duties, which Nature hints at *only in general*, explained *fully and largely*, and urged *in particular*, and inculcated upon the meaneſt Capacities, and *exemplified* in the Lives of H. Perſons propoſed as Patterns for Men's Imitation? What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have thoſe great Motives of Religion, the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State, which Nature *only obſcurely* points at, *deſcribed to us, moſt plainly, affectionately and lively?* What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than to have the means of attoning for Sin, which Nature *diſcovers only the want of*, plainly *declared and exhibited to us?* What can be more perfective of the Light of Nature, than ſuch a Diſcovery of the *heinouſneſs of Sin* and

and the *neceſſity of Holineſs*, as the *Death of Chriſt* and the *Purity of the Goſpel*, does make unto us? In fine, what can more effectually perfect the Religion of Nature, than the *gathering the Worſhippers of God into one Body*, the *uniting them by certain poſitive Rites in one common Communion for mutual aſſiſtance and improvement*, and the *eſtabliſhing a certain Order of Men, whoſe Buſineſs may be to promote the Intereſt of Religion, by inſtructing the Ignorant, and by admoniſhing the Wicked.*

16. Laſtly, Beſides, all theſe Proofs of the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, drawn from the Conſideration of the Nature of the Thing, God has moreover confirmed it by the moſt *undeniable external evidence, that ever was given to any matter of Fact in the World.* The great *Motives* of the Chriſtian Religion, are things not only *moſt probable and moſt credible in themſelves*, but God has moreover *confirmed* the certainty of them by *moſt clear Teſtimony*, (which is a proof ſuited to all Capacities,) and has moſt ſtrongly *urged* upon Men the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State by the *Preaching and Exhortations* of one, who by that convincing Proof of his *Reſurrection from the Dead*, did undeniably demonſtrate that *he had himſelf been there*, and was able to give Men a ſatisfactory Account of the Nature of that State: The great *Duties* of the Chriſtian Religion, are things not only *moſt reaſonable and moſt excellent in themſelves*, but they are moreover *taught and inculcated* by one, who has given the *moſt credible and moſt convincing Evidence* that could poſſibly be deſired, of his being *ſent immediately from God.* The *Miracles* which our Saviour wrought, were to his *firſt Diſciples*, who were *Eye-witneſſes* of them, a moſt *perfect demonſtration* of the Truth of his Doctrine: And the *Hiſtory of his Life, Death and Reſurrection*, delivered down to us upon the *Teſtimony* of thoſe Diſciples, are to *Us* alſo a ſufficient Evidence of the ſame Truth. Their having *converſed from the beginning with our Saviour himſelf*; their having *heard*, and having *ſeen with their Eyes*; their having *looked upon*, and having *handled with their Hands of the Word of Life*, (as St. *John* expreſſes it, 1 *John* 1. 1.) made it impoſſible that *they ſhould be deceived themſelves*: And their whole *Life* and *Converſation*, their *Sufferings* and *Deaths*, were invincible proofs againſt the Adverſaries of Chriſtianity, that they

they had no *deſign of impoſing upon others.* They ſaw all the *Prophecies* of the Old Teſtament preciſely *fulfilled* in the *Life* and *Doctrine*, the *Sufferings* and *Death* of our bleſſed Saviour; they ſaw him *confirm* what he taught with ſuch *mighty Works*, as his bittereſt and moſt malicious Enemies could not but confeſs to be above the Power of Nature, even while they were blaſpheming that Holy Spirit which wrought them; they ſaw the *whole courſe of his Life* to be ſuch, as to all unprejudiced beholders loudly proclaimed his *Divine Commiſſion*; they ſaw him ſo conſtantly *deſpiſe all worldly Greatneſs*, as once when the People would have made him *a King*, even to work a Miracle *to avoid* that, which was the only thing that was poſſible to be *the aim and deſign* of an Impoſtor: In fine, they ſaw him *alive after his Paſſion by many infallible Proofs*, Act. 1. 3. converſing with him for forty Days together, and at laſt beholding him *aſcend viſibly into Heaven.* Theſe were ſuch *demonſtrations* of his being a Teacher ſent from Heaven, and conſequently that his Doctrine was nothing leſs than an immediate and expreſs Revelation of the Will of God, that nothing but the *extremeſt Malice and Obſtinacy* could withſtand them. And the ſame Reaſon that theſe Diſciples of our Saviour had to believe *his* Doctrine, the ſame Reaſon the reſt of the World had to believe *theirs:* They *confirmed* what they taught, by *Signs and Miracles*; they *lived* according to the Doctrine they *Preached*, though manifeſtly contrary to all the Intereſts and Pleaſures of this preſent World; and which no Deceiver could ever do; they *died* with all imaginable chearfulneſs and joy of Mind for the Teſtimony of their Doctrine, and the Confirmation of their Religion. So that unleſs God ſhould work upon Men by ſuch Methods, as are wholly inconſiſtent with the Deſign of Religion, and the Nature of Virtue and Vice; which we are ſure he will not do; nothing can be done more than has already been done, to *convince Men of Religion*, and to *perſuade them to Happineſs.* 'Tis true, the Reſurrection of Chriſt is not ſuch an ocular demonſtration to after Generations, as it was to thoſe Men who *then lived* and *ſaw him*, and *converſed with him*: But ſince the matter of Fact is as clearly proved to *us*, as 'tis poſſible for any matter of fact at that diſtance of time to be; ſince the Evidence of *this* is as great and greater, than of moſt

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of thoſe things on which Men venture the whole of their Secular Affairs; and on which they are willing to ſpend all their time and pains; ſince I ſay the caſe is thus, he that will rather venture all that he can poſſibly inioy or ſuffer; he that will run the hazard of loſing Eternal Happineſs, and falling into Eternal Miſery, rather than believe the *moſt credible and rational* thing in the World, meerly becauſe he does *not ſee it with his Eyes*; 'tis plain that *that* Man does not diſ-believe the thing, becauſe he thinks the *Evidence of it not ſufficiently ſtrong*, but becauſe 'tis *contrary to ſome particular Intereſt of his* that it ſhould be true; and for that reaſon he might alſo have diſ-believed it, though he had ſeen it himſelf.

17. This is in brief the Evidence which we have, of the *Neceſſity of Religion* in general, and of the *Truth of the Chriſtian Inſtitution* in particular: And he that would ſo lay the Foundation of a Religious Life, as to be able to Conquer all the Temptations of the World, and perſevere in Well-doing to the end, muſt *at leaſt ſo far* conſider this evidence, as before all things to work in his own Mind a *Firm, Settled* and *Well-grounded* Belief of the great Truths of Religion. To produce which Effect, this Evidence is moſt abundantly ſufficient. For if in other Caſes, we aſſent to thoſe things as *certain* and *demonſtrated*, which if our *Faculties of Judging and Reaſoning* do not neceſſarily deceive us, do upon the moſt impartial view appear clearly and plainly to be true, there is the ſame Reaſon, why in *Moral* and *Religious* Matters, we ſhould look upon thoſe things likewiſe to be *certain* and *demonſtrated*, which upon the exacteſt and moſt deliberate Judgement that we are capable of making, do appear to us to be as clearly and as certainly true, as 'tis certain that our *Faculties* do not *neceſſarily and unavoidably* deceive us, in all our *Judgments concerning the Nature of God, concerning the proper Happineſs of Man, and concerning the difference of Good and Evil.* And if in other Caſes, we always act without the leaſt hesitation upon the Credit of good and ſufficient Teſtimony, and look upon that Man as fooliſh and ridiculous, who ſuſtains great Loſſes, or lets ſlip great Opportunities and Advantages in Buſineſs, only by diſtruſting the moſt credible and well-atteſted things in the World; 'tis plain there is the ſame Reaſon, why we ſhould do ſo

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alſo in Matters of Religion. So that unleſs our Actions be determined by ſome other thing, than by Reaſon and Judgment; the Evidence which we have of the great Truths of Religion, ought to have the ſame Effect upon our Lives and Actions, as if they were proved to us by any other ſort of Evidence that cou'd be deſired

18. There are indeed ſome Men, who being conſcious to themſelves that they act contrary to all the reaſonable Evidence and Convictions of Religion, are yet apt to imagine, that if the great Truths of Religion were proved to them by ſome ſtronger Evidence, they *ſhould* by that means be wrought upon to act otherwiſe than they do. But if the true Reaſon why theſe Men act thus fooliſhly, is not becauſe *the Doctrines of Religion* are not ſufficiently evidenced, but becauſe *they themſelves* are hurried away by ſome unruly Paſſions to act directly contrary to all Reaſon and Evidence; 'tis plain (unleſs God ſhould irreſiſtably compel them) they might well continue to act as they do, tho' the Evidence of theſe things were really greater than it is. They are willing to imagine, that if they had lived in our Saviour's time; if they had heard his Preaching and ſeen his Miracles; if they had had the Advantage of beholding thoſe mighty Works, which he wrought for the proof of his Divine Commiſſion, as the *Jews* then had; they ſhould not, like them, *have rejected the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*, Luke 7. 30. but with all cheerfulneſs have believed his Doctrine, and embraced his Religion. They fanſie they ſhould immediately become Diſciples of Chriſt, and that the Truths which he taught, would have had a moſt powerful influence upon the whole Courſe of their Lives. And if their Hearts and Affections were not ſet upon this World, more than upon the next; if they valued not the *preſent enjoyments of Senſe*, above the *expectation of the Glory that ſhall be revealed*; moſt certainly they would do the ſame now. But if their Hearts be ſet upon earthly things, and their Paſſions be ſtronger than all the Arguments of Reaſon; if they do indeed ſo love the Pleaſures of Sin now, as that they cannot perſuade themſelves by all the motives of Religion to live like Chriſtians; we need not queſtion to affirm, that they might very well have been in the ſame caſe, though they had lived in our Saviour's time. The Jews are a notorious and ſtanding Inſtance, how

how far Prejudice and Affection are able to prevail over the ſtrongeſt Convictions: When our Saviour began to preach, that he was ſent from God to inſtruct them in their Duty, they required a *Sign* of him, and they *would believe* him; but when he had wrought ſo many Miracles, that *even the World it ſelf could not contain the Books*, Jo. 2 25. *if they ſhould all be written* they perſiſted ſtill in their Infidelity: When they ſaw him hanging upon the Croſs, and thought themſelves ſecure of him, they ſaid, *Let him now come down from the Croſs, and we will believe him*, Mat. 27. 42. but when he aroſe out of the Grave wherein he had lien three Days, which was a much greater and convincing Miracle, they grew more hardned and obſtinate in their Unbelief.

19. Others there are who imagine, that if they could but be convinced of the Truth of another World by the appearance of one ſent directly from that unknown State, they would immediately become new Creatures; but if God ſhould ſatisfie their unreaſonable Demands, by ſending one on purpoſe from the Dead to convince them, I doubt not but as they liſtened not to *Moſes and the Prophets*, ſo *neither would they be perſuaded by one riſing from the Dead*, Lu. 16. 31. They might indeed at firſt be ſurprized and terrified, at the appearance of ſo unuſual and unexpected a Meſſenger: But as wicked Men upon a Bed of Sickneſs, at the amazing approach of Death and Eternity, reſolve in the utmoſt anguiſh of Horror and Deſpair to amend their Lives and forſake their Sins, but as ſoon as the Terror is over and the danger of Death paſt, return to their old habits of Sin and Folly; ſo it is more than probable it would be in the preſent Caſe: Should God ſend a Meſſenger from the Dead, to aſſure Men of the certainty of a future State, and the Danger of their preſent Wickedneſs, as ſoon as the Fright were over and their preſent terrible Apprehenſions ceaſed, 'tis by no means impoſſible that their old vicious Habits and beloved Sins ſhould again by degrees prevail over them. Many there are in our preſent Age, who pretend to be convinced of the being of Spirits by the powerful demonſtrations of their own Senſes; and yet we do not obſerve, that their Lives are more remarkably eminent for exemplary Piety, than theirs, who being convinced by the leſs violent, but more rational Evidence of the

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Goſpel go on in a ſober, conſtant, and regular Exerciſe of Virtue and Righteouſneſs.

20. In ſumm therefore, *Conſider* that the Evidence of Religion is ſuch, as upon the fulleſt view of things, and the exacteſt and moſt deliberate Judgment that we can poſſibly make, ought infinitely to determine the Actions of a wiſe Man; *Conſider* that the great Doctrines of Religion are of ſuch a Nature, that upon the final upſhot of things, if all our *Knowledge* be not *Deceit*, if all our *Hopes and Fears* be not *Vain*, if there be any *Good*, if there be any *Evil*, if there be any *Excellency*, if there be any *Happineſs*, theſe things *muſt* be true: *Conſider* this, I ſay, throughly; and then *Reſolve*, deliberately and with full perſuaſion of Mind, to act always ſuitably to this Conſideration, and to put all upon this one Iſſue. And when *Temptation* and *Melancholly* ſhall ſucceed; when *vain Scruples* and *unreaſonable Suſpitions*, ſhall cloud the Underſtanding and perplex the Mind, be ſure to ſtick immovably to that *Reſolution*, which has once been founded upon the wiſeſt Judgment and the fulleſt Conviction poſſible; and when the preſent Indiſpoſition of Mind ſhall be over, things will again appear in their true Light, and the firſt *Reſolution* will grow continually ſtronger.

21. Only *in the laſt place*, and *above all*, be ſure to *fix* theſe things deeply upon the Mind, by *frequent and ſerious Meditation*. The *Paſſions* and *Affections* of Men are ſtrong; and unleſs *theſe* alſo can by ſome means be intereſted, the *bare Conviction of a Mans Judgment* will hardly be able to govern conſtantly all the Actions of his Life. 'Tis not enough that we be *convinced in our Judgments*, of the Truth of the great Doctrines of *Religion*; but we muſt by conſtant Meditation *fix and inculcate* them upon the Mind, that they may move our *Paſſions* and excite our *Affections*. Be not content to believe ſlightly the *Being of God*, but repreſent him frequently in your Mind with the moſt lively Characters of *Glory* and *Majeſty*; conſider him as that Supreme Being, *who hath meaſured the Waters in the hollow of his Hand, and meted out Heaven with the Span, and comprehended the Duſt of the Earth in a Meaſure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance*, Iſa. 40. 12. to whom *all Nations are as a drop of the Bucket, and are counted as the ſmall Duſt of the Balance*; Conſider him

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as that All-powerful Being, before whom *the Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are aſtoniſhed at his reproof*, Job. 26. 11. before whom *all Nations are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing and Vanity*, Iſai. 40. 17 Be not content to believe *in general* the *Providence of God*, but think of him always as actually preſent, obſerving all our Words and Actions, and *underſtanding* even our *Thoughts afar off*, Pſ. 139. 2. Be not content to believe *in general* a *Judgment to come*, but frequently repreſent to your ſelf the Solemnity and the Terrour of that great Day; imagine our Saviour ſitting in Judgment, as in that Prophetical Alluſion, *Dan.* 7. 9. with *his Throne like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire; A fiery ſtream iſſuing, and coming forth from before him; Thouſand thouſands miniſtring unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtanding before him; the Judgment ſet, and the Books opened.* Laſtly, be not content to believe *ſlightly and in general* a *ſtate of Reward or Puniſhment for Virtue or Vice*: but meditate frequently on the Happineſs of thoſe, who ſhall be admitted to *the heavenly Jeruſalem, to the general Aſſembly of the firſtborn, to an innumerable company of Angels, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, Heb. 12. 23. Conſider the Happineſs of thoſe, who ſhall be made *Kings and Prieſts unto God*, Rev. 5. 10. and *ſhall reign* with him *for ever*; who ſhall *ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament*, and *as the Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3. And on the other hand meditate ſeriouſly on the Miſery of thoſe, who ſhall be caſt *into the Lake of Fire and Brimſtone*, where *the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*, Mar. 9. 44. and where *they ſhall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever*, Rev. 20. 10.

22. I have been the longer upon this Head, becauſe 'tis the firſt and moſt neceſſary Foundation of all Religion; and becauſe that *ſlight, careleſs*, and *only cuſtomary* Aſſent to the great Truths of Religion, which is the Summ of moſt Mens Faith, ſeems to be the chief Reaſon why things of the utmoſt importance have ſo ſmall an effect upon the Lives and Actions of Men. There is no need that every Man ſhould proceed juſt by thoſe ſteps, which I have ſet down; but whoever will indeed make Religion the buſineſs of his Life, muſt by ſome like Method work in his Mind

a *firm and well-grounded Belief* of all its great Doctrines, and a *deep and vigorous Senſe* of them.

CHAP. III.

Of right Notions *concerning Religion in general.*

1. SEcondly, *Endeavour to attain right Notions concerning Religion in general.* Next to the Belief of the *Truth* and *Neceſſity of Religion*, there is nothing of greater importance than the framing right Notions concerning the *Nature* of it. For when Religion is repreſented as requiring any thing, that is either not poſſible or not neceſſary to be practiced; when 'tis repreſented as conſiſting in ſuch things, as are either not worthy of God, or not profitable to Men; in a word, when Religion is ſo repreſented, that Men may hope to be *religious* without being *vertuous*, and to be accepted of God for ſome *outward Performances*, without a *holy temper and diſpoſition of Mind*; this cuts the very Sinews and undermines the Foundation of all Religion.

2. Now therefore to attain right Notions concerning the Nature of Religion, a Man ought firmly to perſuade himſelf of theſe following Conſiderations: That *the exerciſe of thoſe great Moral Virtues of Godlineſs, Righteouſneſs and Temperance, which are the eternal and unchangeable Law of God, is a thing in its own Nature both truly excellent, and indiſpenſably neceſſary to prepare Men for that Happineſs which is the Reward of Religion:* That *God truly and ſincerely deſires to make Men happy, by the exerciſe of theſe Virtues:* And that *therefore the great and ultimate Deſign of all true Religion, is to recommend theſe Virtues, and to inforce their practice.*

That *the exerciſe of theſe great Moral Virtues, of Godlineſs, Righteouſneſs and Temperance, which are the eternal and unchangeable Law of God, is a thing in its own Nature truly Noble and Excellent*, is evidently acknowledged, by the common Conſent and Verdict of all Mens Conſciences. Theſe Virtues are the imitation of the Perfections of God; and as no Man is ſo brutiſh, as not to admire the Perfections of Juſtice and Goodneſs, when he conſiders them abſtractedly *in God*; ſo he cannot but pay a proportionable

tionable reſpect, to whatever he ſees carry their reſemblance *in Men.* Hence *Virtue* is the moſt *lovely and venerable* of all things, and approves it ſelf to the Reaſon and Conſciences of Men: Hence *Vice* becomes truly *odious*, and however it may *inſinuate* it ſelf into the *Practice*, can never *recommend* it ſelf to the *Judgment* of Mankind. Hence even thoſe very Perſons, who by the prevailing Power of ſome Intereſt or Luſt are themſelves drawn aſide out of the Paths of Virtue, cannot yet forbear to give it its true Character and Commendation in *others.* Thus the Officers, who were ſent by the *Phariſees* to apprehend Jeſus, could not forbear declaring, that *he ſpake as never Man ſpake*, Joh. 7. 46. And the *Roman* Governour, when he gave Sentence that he ſhould be Crucified, could not at the ſame inſtant forbear openly profeſſing, that *he found no fault in him*, Joh. 18. 38. Men cannot chuſe but think well of that Virtue, which the *Dominion of their Luſts* forces them to *deſert*, or the *neceſſity of their Affairs* compels them to *diſcourage*: They cannot but wiſh, they were the Men are th ey not; and pray with *Balaam*, that though they *imitate not the Life*, yet at leaſt they might *die the Death of the Righteous*, and that their *laſt end* may *be like his*, Num. 23. 10. Though therefore *virtuous Men* are frequently perſecuted in the World and ſometimes *meerly for their Virtue*; yet 'tis not becauſe Virtue can ever be hated, but becauſe thoſe from whom they ſuffer, miſtake it to be what it is not; or elſe becauſe, knowing it to be what it is, they are notwithſtanding prevailed upon by ſome private Intereſt, to perſecute it contrary to the Judgment of their Conſcience, which would force them to honour and reſpect it. An Inſtance of the *former Caſe*, are all the Perſecutions of the Chriſtians in the Primitive Times: 'Tis certain theſe Men were *Virtuous and Religious*, and 'tis certain they ſuffered *meerly upon that account*: But then 'tis alſo as certain, that thoſe from whom they ſuffered did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them *Religious*, but becauſe they miſtook *them not to be ſo*; they did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them to be *worſhippers of the true God*, but becauſe they looked on them as *deſpiſers of their falſe ones*: They were ſo unhappily blinded by Prejudice and Idolatry, that they miſtook *Religion* for *Superſtition*, and *Superſtition* for *Religion*:

Hence they implacably perſecuted that Doctrine, whoſe Evidence and Conviction, if they would have opened their Eyes, they could not have reſiſted; and endeavoured to root out the *true Religion*, out of Zeal to the honour of a *falſe one*. An eminent Inſtance of the *latter Caſe*, is the Condemnation of our Saviour: He was manifeſtly *innocent* of the Crimes laid to his Charge, and *Pilate knew him to be ſo*; but then 'tis alſo manifeſt, that he did not condemn him becauſe he was Innocent, but becauſe he was *willing to do the Jews a Pleaſure*, Act. 24. 27. Our Saviour's Innocence was ſufficient to convince the Mind of his Judge; and 'twas only Intereſt, that over-powered the force of that Conviction. Virtue therefore is truly *Noble and Excellent* in it ſelf; and wicked Men, even while they are perſecuting it, cannot deny it to be ſo.

4. Again, That *the exerciſe of thoſe great Moral Virtues, of Godlineſs Righteouſneſs and Temperance, is a thing indiſpenſably neceſſary to prepare Men for that Happineſs which is the Reward of Religion*, is evident from the Conſideration of the Nature of that Happineſs. The Happineſs which Religion promiſes to holy and good Men, is this; That they ſhall be received into the bleſſed Society of *Angels*, and of the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect*, Heb. 12. 23. and that with them they ſhall be admitted into the immediate Preſence of *God*, to enjoy that Satisfaction which muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the *Contemplation of his Perfections*, and from the *Senſe of his Favour*. And if this be the Caſe, then nothing is more evident, than that the *excerciſe of Virtue* is indiſpenſably neceſſary to prepare Men for the *enjoyment of this Happineſs*. For what agreement can there be between a *ſenſual, ſpightful* or *malicious Soul*, and the pure Society of the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect?* We ſee even in this Life, how ungrateful the Society of good Men is, unto thoſe that are wicked; and as it is in this, ſo doubtleſs it will be in the other World. Thoſe Souls which have been wholly *immerſed in Senſe*, and *given up to the Pleaſures* of this preſent World, can never be fit Company for thoſe *ſpiritual* and *refined* Minds, whoſe Deſires and Enjoyments are as far exalted above every thing that is groſs and ſenſual, as Heaven is above Earth: And thoſe *malicious* Spirits, whoſe delight upon *Earth* was in nothing but *Hatred, Envy* and *Revenge*;

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can never converſe in Heaven with thoſe Divine Souls, who feed and live upon no other Pleaſures, but thoſe of *Goodneſs*, *Holineſs* and *Love*. In like manner, what can be more impoſſible, than for an *earthly and wicked* Soul, to be made happy by the *Viſion and Fruition of God?* To *ſee God*, is to behold and contemplate thoſe Glorious Perfections, of infinite *Goodneſs*, *Purity* and *Truth*; and to *enjoy God*, is ſo to love and adore thoſe amiable Perfections, as to be transformed into the likeneſs and reſemblance of them: And is it poſſible for a wicked Soul, to be made partaker of this Happineſs? Tell a *covetous Worldling* of a *Treaſure* laid up *in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and ſteal*, Mat. 6. 20. Tell him of a *never-fading Inheritance* in the World to come, or of a *City not made with Hands, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*, Heb. 11. 10. Tell an *ambitious* aſpiring Mind, of the *Glory that ſhall be revealed hereafter*, Rom. 8. 18. or a *voluptuous* Perſon of *ſpiritual* and refined Pleaſures, *which Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of* Men *to conceive them*, 1 Cor. 2. 9. and will they have any reliſh of theſe things? Will they not be much more inquiſitive after the *Glories of the Earth*, and the *Gratifications of Senſe*? So that unleſs we ſuppoſe God ſhould work a Miracle for theſe Men, and when he removes them into another World, ſhould transform them alſo into new Creatures, 'tis no more poſſible for them to enjoy the Happineſs of Heaven, than for *Body* to enjoy the Pleaſures of *Spirit*, or for *Darkneſs*, to have communion and agreement with *Light*. I do not ſay, That if God ſhould tranſplant theſe Men into Heaven, he *could* not make them happy there; but while they are ſo exceedingly indiſpoſed for it, nothing is more certain than that he never *will*. The *exerciſe* therefore of *Virtue*, is the indiſpenſable *Condition of Happineſs*: And in proportion as we draw nearer to the *Perfection of Virtue*, ſo do we to the *Fountain and Perfection of Happineſs*. The greater degrees of Virtue any Being is indued with, ſo much the higher Rank does it obtain in the Order of Creatures: The higheſt Angels, ſo much as they obey the Will of God *more intirely*, and imitate the Divine Life *more perfectly* than Men do, ſo much are they exalted *above* Men, and have a nearer approach to the immediate preſence and enjoyment of God:

And by how much one Man in *this Life* obtains a greater degree of *Holineſs* than another; ſo much a more excellent Degree of *Happineſs* is he prepared to receive in the *World to come.*

5. And That God agreeably to this natural Order of things, *does truly and ſincerely deſire to make Men happy by the exerciſe of Virtue*, is evident both from our *natural Notions of God*, and from the *Revealed Declaration of his Will.* God, who is a Being infinitely happy in the injoyment of himſelf, and who created all things for no other Reaſon, but to communicate to them his Perfections and his Happineſs, *cannot* poſſibly but make every Man as *happy*, as the *condition of his Nature*, and the *improvements of his Virtue* make him capable to be: And that he *will* do ſo, he hath moreover aſſured us by moſt expreſs and repeated Declarations. He declares that his *Delight* is in them that fear him, and that he *Rejoyces* over them for good; He *invites* Men with all the tender Promiſes of a compaſſionate Father, to Repentance and Reformation, and *ſwears by himſelf*, that he hath no pleaſure in the deſtruction of the Wicked, but earneſtly deſires that they ſhould return and live: And nothing can be more abſurd, than to imagine that God has *ſecretly* made any determination, which may be contrary to what he has ſo *openly and expreſly* revealed. *What ſort of Men he has decreed to be happy or miſerable*, he has clearly and fully declared to us in his Word. And *other Decrees* than this, if he has *at all* made any, 'tis neither *neceſſary* nor *poſſible* for us to know. Sufficient it is for us, that *as ſure* as God and his Scriptures are true, *ſo ſure* are we, that he that *believes and obeys* the Goſpel ſhall be *happy*; and that God neither *has*, nor can Decree any thing, whereby a *truly Religious Man* may be excluded from *Happineſs*, or a *Sincere Man* from the *poſſibility of becoming truly religious.*

6. Since therefore *God truly and ſincerely deſires, to make Men Happy by the exerciſe of Virtue*; and ſince *that Virtue, which is the Condition of Happineſs, is no other than the Practice of thoſe great Moral Duties, of Godlineſs, Righteouſneſs and Temperance, which are the Eternal and Unchangeable Law of God*; as has already been ſhewn; it follows neceſſarily, that *the great and ultimate Deſign of all true Religion, can be no other than to recommend theſe Virtues,*

tues, and to enforce their practice. Other things may be *Helps and Aſſiſtances* of Religion; many *External Obſervances* may for wiſe Reaſons be *poſitively* commanded, and may be of exceeding great uſe, as *means* to promote Devotion and Piety; but the *Life and Subſtance* of all true Religion, the *End and Scope* in which all things elſe muſt terminate, cannot poſſibly be any other, than the *Practice of theſe Great and Eternal Duties.*

7. In *Natural Religion* this is very evident: For the Foundation of *its* Obligations being nothing elſe, but a due conſideration of the *Nature of God*, and his *Relation to Men*; 'tis plain, all that theſe things naturally led Men to, was only to keep up in themſelves ſuch a Holy Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, as might diſcover it ſelf in a conſtant endeavour of being *Like unto God*, and of *obeying his Laws.* And though this moſt *ſimple and abſolute* Religion, did through the corruption of Mens Wills and Affections, quickly degenerate into the *groſſeſt Idolatry*, and moſt *ridiculous Superſtition*; tho' inſtead of *real and ſubſtantial Virtue*, the generallity of Men ſoon fell into the Obſervance of *fooliſh and abſurd Rites*, and the World was overſpread with *Ignorance* and *Vice*; yet the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate Men amongſt the Heathens always underſtood, that God did not look ſo much at the *Outward Pomp and Ceremony* of Religion, as at the *Inward Holineſs and Purity* of the Heart; that God valued not *Sacrifices and Rich Offerings*, but only the *Piety and Devotion* of the Mind: and that the only way to keep the Favour of God, was to *imitate his Nature*, and to *obey his Commands.*

8. Nor is it leſs evident that the great and ultimate deſign of the *Jewiſh Religion*, was to preſerve and increaſe the Moral Virtue of Men. For though God *did* impoſe upon the Jews a burdenſome Syſtem of *Rites and Ordinances*; yet 'tis plain he did it, not that he took any delight in that *External and Ceremonial Service*, but that by condeſcending in that manner to the infirmities and prejudices of a ſtiff-necked People, he might keep up the Worſhip of the True God, and reſtore that Holineſs and Inward Religion of Mens Minds, which the Light of Nature had not been ſufficient to maintain. This therefore God perpetually inculcates to them by his Prophets, that he did not value their Ceremonious Performances with-

out Holineſs and Obedience to the Moral Law: *I ſpake not to your Fathers*, ſaith he, *nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of* Egypt, *concerning Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my Voice*, Jer. 7. 22. Nay, ſo far was God from Inſtituting the Jewiſh Service upon any other deſign, than the making that People more Holy than the Heathen about them were, that whenſoever it failed of having that deſired Effect, he declares, that he even abhorred all their Religious Exerciſes: *He that killeth an Ox, is as if he ſlew a Man; he that ſacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogs Neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood; and he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol; yea they have choſen their own ways, and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations*, Iſ. 66. 3. And though the later Jews grew generally ſo ſuperſtitious in their obſervance of their Ceremonies, as thereby even to neglect the *weightier matters of the Law*; yet thoſe who conſidered things more throughly, always maintain'd and taught zealouſly, *that it was not ſlaying a multitude of Sacrifice, or bringing ſplendid Offerings, or even building and adorning the Temple of God with all the coſt and beauty in the World, that could truly denominate a Man religious; that it was a great deceit for Men to think that God would be flatter'd and put off with Outward Ceremonious Services inſtead of Truth, Righteouſneſs and Holineſs of Mind*; and that *nothing could be more ridiculous, than for Men to be very careful not to enter into the Temple, which is built of Wood and Stone, without firſt waſhing and cleanſing their Bodies; and yet not be afraid to appear before God in Prayer, with unclean and polluted Minds.*

9. Laſtly, That the only deſign of God's Inſtituting the *Chriſtian Religion*; was to make Men yet more virtuous and more Holy, is evident from the whole Tenour of the Goſpel. The deſign of our Saviour's *Life and Preaching*, was to give Men a Body of more Spiritual and Refined Laws; to ſet them an Example of a more perfect and holy Life; and to make a clearer Revelation of *the Wrath of God againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men*, Rom. 1. 18. The Deſign of his *Death and Paſſion*, was to make an Expiation for Sins that are paſt, and to make a fuller diſcovery of the heinous Nature of Sin, which

which God would not pardon even upon true Repentance, without ſo great and ſufficient a Satisfaction: And the Deſign of his *ſending the Holy Spirit*, was to *purifie to himſelf a peculiar People, by teaching* and enabling Men, *that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, they *ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World*, Tit. 2. 12.

10. Accordingly we find the Apoſtles every where in their Epiſtles, plainly declaring and giving Men warning that ſince they had now received a moſt full Revelation of the Will of God, and a moſt clear Diſcovery of the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State; if their *Virtue* did not become proportionable to their *Knowledge*, and they purified not themſelves *from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. it would be even worſe for them, than if they *had never known the way of Righteouſneſs*, 2 Pet. 2. 21. *Be not deceived*, ſaith Saint *Paul*, *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards*, &c. *i. e.* no unrighteous Perſon, *ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9. And again, *Let no Man deceive you with Vain Words; For becauſe of theſe things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of diſobedience*, Eph. 5. 6. And again, *Of which things I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in times paſt, that they who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, Gal. 5. 21. And all thoſe Metaphorical Expreſſions, ſuch as the *New Man, the New Creature, the New Birth, Regeneration, Converſion*, and the like, by which the Apoſtles frequently repreſent Religion, do manifeſtly tend to this; that under the Goſpel-diſpenſation, nothing will ſtand a Man in any ſtead, but an entire Reformation of Life and Manners; and that all other things are *nothing*, except only *the keeping the Commandments of God*, 1 Cor. 7. 19.

11. How miſerably then do thoſe Men abuſe this *great Salvation* and *turn the Grace of God into laſciviouſneſs*, who imagine, that becauſe Chriſt has *diſannulled the Old Law, which was appointed only for a time*, therefore we may be excuſed by our Chriſtian Liberty from *obeying the eternal Commands of God*; *that* becauſe Chriſt has eſtabliſhed for us *a Covenant of Grace*, therefore we need not be zealous *to abound in good Works*; *that* becauſe Chriſt has *Redeemed us from the Puniſhment of Sin, by the Sacrifice of*

himſelf, therefore we need not be zealous *to reſcue our ſelves from under the Power and Dominion of it*; *that* becauſe *the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt ſhall be available for us unto Juſtification*, therefore there is no neceſſity we ſhould have any of our own: In a word, *that* becauſe Chriſt has promiſed Salvation to thoſe who believe the Goſpel, therefore there is no neceſſity we ſhould be ſolicitous to obey it.

12. Our Saviour *has* indeed *diſanulled the Ceremonial part of the Law*, which was *appointed only for a time*; but he has thereby *more firmly Eſtabliſhed the Moral part of the Law which is of eternal and unchangeable Obligation*: And therefore as nothing could be more *fooliſh* than the Opinion of thoſe *Judaizers*, who thought that Chriſt had not abrogated any part of the Law; ſo nothing can be more *impious* than the Opinion of theſe *Gentilizers*, who contend that he has deſtroyed it *all*. Our Saviour *has* indeed *purchaſed for us a Covenant of Grace*, that is, a Covenant wherein Pardon is granted to paſt Sins upon Repentance; but the indiſpenſable Condition of that Covenant, is, that *we be* for the future *zealous of good Works*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. He *has* indeed *brought Life and Immortality to light thro' the Goſpel*, and opened to us an *abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God*, Pet. 1. 11. but 'tis not that any unrenewed Nature ſhall be admitted to have a ſhare in thoſe pure and undefiled Rewards, but that thoſe who have *broken off their Sins by Repentance, and their Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor*, may through his Merits be reſtored to the Love and Favour of God. Our Saviour *has indeed redeemed us from the Puniſhment of Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; but 'tis expreſly upon condition, that we *reſcue our ſelves from the Power and Dominion of it*. In order to this, he has made a moſt clear Diſcovery of the Will of God to us, and enabled us to obey it according to that Diſcovery; he has beaten off our Chains, and opened us a way to retreat out of the Bondage of Sin and Satan, *into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*, Rom. 8. 21. he has paid the Price, and Redeemed us out of Captivity: But if notwithſtanding all this, we ſtill continue in Sin, 'tis our own *fault and extreme folly* here, and will be our *condemnation and miſery* hereafter; if notwithſtanding all that Chriſt has done for us, we will yet ſit ſtill under the *Power* of Sin, we ſhall notwithſtanding all that he has done

done and ſuffered for us, at laſt fall into the *Puniſhment* thereof. *The Righteouſneſs of Chriſt is indeed ſo far available to thoſe who ſincerely deſire to obey the Goſpel, as that for his ſake that imperfect Righteouſneſs, by which they could not be juſtified according to the Law, ſhall be acceptable before God (through Faith in him) unto Juſtification*; But for one who uſes no indeavour to be righteous himſelf, to expect to be juſtified by the external Imputation of the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, is for a Sick Man to expect to be made whole by the Imputation of anothers Health; or for a Miſerable Man to be made happy meerly by the Imputation of another Man's Felicity. Righteouſneſs is not an outward imaginary Quality, but an inward and real Diſpoſition of Heart and Mind, which muſt ſhew forth it ſelf in real and ſubſtantial acts of Holineſs and Piety: *Little Children*, ſaith St. *John*, *let no Man deceive you; He that doth Righteouſneß is righteous*, 1 John 3. 7. Laſtly, Our Saviour *has* indeeed promiſed Salvation, to thoſe who *Believe* the Goſpel; but 'tis moſt expreſly upon this condition, that they *Obey* it alſo. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven*, Mat. 5. 21. Without this Obedience, nothing in the World can ſtand a Man in any ſtead: His Believing and Profeſſing the Truth of the Chriſtian Faith, will avail him nothing: His continuing in the Communion of the Church of Chriſt, will profit him nothing: *If any Man ſeems to be religious*, and continues in any one Sin, *deceiving his own Heart, that Mans Religion is vain*, Jam. 1. 26. For tho' he could *ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and had all Faith, ſo that he could remove Mountains*, yet if he were not Holy in his Life and Converſation, it would *profit him nothing*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2. Many will plead before our Saviour at the Day of Judgment, that they have not only *believed* his Doctrine, but alſo have *taught in his Name*, and *in his Name have caſt out Devils*, and *in his Name done many wonderful Works*, Luke 13. 26. that is, have had the extraordinary Gift even of working Miracles, and yet if they be *workers of Iniquity*, he will ſay unto them, *Depart from me, I know you not.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A Digreſſion concerning the Doctrine of Faith *and* Works, *delivered by* St. Paul *in his Epiſtle to the* Romans, *and in that to the* Galatians.

1. THere is but one thing, that I know of, that can with any colour be urged againſt this Notion of true Religion which I have now laid down: And that is, the Doctrine of *Faith* and *Works*, delivered by St. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and in that to the *Galatians*. Which becauſe it is a Doctrine of the greateſt Importance, and liable to be miſinterpreted to countenance the moſt pernicious Errors: I ſhall therefore in this *Chapter*, by way of Digreſſion, endeavour to give a brief Account of the *Occaſion* of the writing theſe two *Epiſtles*, and to explain the *Doctrine* delivered therein.

2. Before the coming of Chriſt, the *Jews* we know, were the peculiar People of God, ſelected out of all the Nations of the Earth to be the Standard of true Religion, and to be the People among whom God would chuſe to place his Name. *To them were commited the Oracles of God*, Rom. 3. 2. *To them pertained the Adoption and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes; whoſe are the Fathers, and out of whom according to the Fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever*, Rom, 9. 4, and 5. that is; with *them* were intruſted the Revelations of the Will of God, the Law and the Prophecies: To *them* was granted the peculiar Honour and Priveledge, that they ſhould be accounted the Sons or People of God, and that they ſhould be accordingly under the more peculiar Care and Protection of his Providence: Among them was the Ark and Temple of God, the *Shecinah* or Glorious Preſence of the Divine Majeſty; *In Judah was God known, his Name was great in Iſrael: In Salem alſo was his Tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion*: With them God entered ſolemnly into Covenant, that he would be their God, and they ſhould be his People, and confirmed this Covenant by the Sacramental Seal of Circumciſion, and with ſprinkling of Blood: To *them* God himſelf preſcribed a Law or Form

of

of Worſhip in a wonderful and miraculous Manner; and their Polity alſo was of Divine Inſtitution and Appointment; *God ſhewed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments unto Iſrael: He did not deal ſo with any other Nation, neither had the Heathen knowledge of his Laws.* Laſtly, *They* were the Poſterity of thoſe Patriarchs, to whom God has ſo often promiſed and ſworn by himſelf, That in their Seed ſhould all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed; and among them was born that Meſſias of whom ſo great things had been Propheſied, and who was therefore the expectation of all the ends of the Earth. Theſe were the great and glorious Privileges, which by the peculiar Favour of God, the Nation of the *Jews* enjoyed before the preaching of the Goſpel; theſe were the Grounds upon which that People ſo highly valued themſelves, above the reſt of Mankind: And moſt juſtly might they have done ſo, with an humble and thankful acknowledgment of the Mercy and Favour of God: But they look'd upon theſe high Privileges, not as the free Gift of God, but as a Right and Propriety, to which they only had a juſt Claim, who could reckon their Deſcent from *Abraham* and the Patriarchs: All other Nations in the World they look'd upon with the utmoſt Scorn and Contempt, as *Aliens from the Common-wealth of* Iſrael, *Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſe*, and ſcarce worthy of the Protection of the Divine Providence. The Eſtabliſhment of their Law and Ceremonies they imagined to be ſuch, as was deſigned by God to continue for ever; and the Promiſes contained in the Law and the Prophets they thought to belong ſo peculiarly to themſelves, that they would not believe any other People could ever come to be partakers of them. When the Meſſiah himſelf ſhould appear, they were perſuaded that he was to eſtabliſh an everlaſting Kingdom over the Jewiſh Nation only, and ſo become indeed the Wonder and Amazement, but not the Salvation of the Gentiles. This Opinion was ſo firmly rooted among them in our Saviours time, that even thoſe who believed in his Name, and were convinced that his Kingdom was not to be a Temporal but a Spiritual Kingdom, did yet imagine that the Jews only were to be admitted to be Subjects of this his Spiritual Kingdom, and that the Goſpel was not to be preached to the *Gentiles*:

Till

Till St. *Peter* having an expreſs Command from Heaven not to count any Man common or unclean, as you may read, *Acts* 10. went and preached the Goſpel to *Cornelius* the Centurion; and his Preaching being ſeconded by the miraculous effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Gentile Converts, convinced them that *God* was *of a truth no reſpecter of Perſons*, but that he had *unto the Gentiles alſo granted Repentance unto Life*, Act. 10. 34. The great Myſtery of the receiving in of the *Gentiles* being thus diſcovered, and God having himſelf declared by ſuch a remarkable Miracle, that *in every Nation he that feareth God and worketh Righteouſneſs is accepted of him*; there immediately aroſe a queſtion, whether thoſe who by being converted to Chriſtianity were admitted into the number of the elect People of God, and thereby became partakers of all the Privileges which had hitherto been confined to the Jewiſh Nation, were not thereupon obliged to become Proſelytes alſo to the Jewiſh Law. The converted *Jews*, who had not yet laid aſide their old Prejudices, but retained an extreme fondneſs for their Ceremonial Law, contended moſt earneſtly, that it *was* neceſſary that the Jewiſh Religion ſhould be continued together with the Chriſtian, *teaching the Brethren every where, and ſaying, Except ye be circumciſed after the manner of Moſes, ye cannot be ſaved*, Act 15. 1. Upon this the Apoſtles and Elders which were gathered together at *Jeruſalem*, held a Conſultation; where St. *Peter* having delivered it as his Opinion, That ſince God himſelf had born witneſs to the *Gentiles*, by giving them the Holy Ghoſt, 'twould be no better than tempting God, to put a Yoke upon their Necks, which neither themſelves nor their Fathers had been able to bear; they immediately agreed to write unto them, that they did not think it neceſſary to lay upon them any ſuch Burden; as you may ſee at large, *Acts* 15. And now the Queſtion being decided by ſuch an authoritative Sentence as this, *It ſeemed good unto the Holy Ghoſt, and to us the Apoſtles, Elders*, &c. one would have thought there ſhould have been no more Debate about this Matter: But the reſtleſs *Jews*, moved with Envy that the Gentiles ſhould be admitted into the Number of the elect People of God as well as themſelves, perſiſted ſtill in their Obſtinacy notwithſtanding this poſitive Determination

termination, perſuading the Gentile Converts, that they *muſt needs obſerve the Law of Moſes*, and *conſtraining them to be circumciſed*; inſomuch that St. *Paul*, who as far as he could, lawfully conformed himſelf to the Humours of *all Men*, that he *might by all means gain ſome*, was forced to Circumciſe *Timothy* at *Derbe*, *becauſe of the Jews that were in thoſe Quarters*, Acts 16. 3. Though at other times, as being the Apoſtle to whom was eſpecially committed the preaching of the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*, he always earneſtly exhorted his Gentile Converts to *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free*; and particularly, his *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, and that to the *Galatians*, were written upon this very Occaſion; as will be evident to any one, who ſhall impartially conſider the Matter.

3. For, that there are abundance of Paſſages in theſe *Epiſtles*, which ſo evidently relate to this Controverſie, that they cannot poſſibly be interpreted to any other Senſe, is manifeſt from but curſorily reading the Epiſtles themſelves. A great part of the *Epiſtle* to the *Romans* is profeſſedly about the caſting off the *Jews*, and the coming in of the *Gentiles*; particularly the 9th, 10th and 11th Chapters: And the 14th Chapter is wholly ſpent in ſhewing the unneceſſarineſs of the Jewiſh obſervation of Days and diſtinction of Meats; *One Man eſteemeth one Day above another, another eſteemeth every Day alike*, Verſe 5. and *I know and am perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of it ſelf; but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, Verſe 14. and ſo on. In the *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians*, the Apoſtle tells his Gentile Converts, that he was amazed they ſhould ſo ſoon be drawn away from the Truth, by ſome that *troubled* them and *would pervert the Goſpel of Chriſt*, Chap. 1. ver. 7. He gives them warning, that the reaſon why thoſe perverters of the Goſpel perſuaded them to Judaize, was only that they might make a fair ſhew in the Fleſh; *they conſtrain you*, ſays he, *to be circumciſed, only leſt they ſhould ſuffer perſecution for the Croſs of Chriſt*; *For neither they themſelves, who are circumciſed, keep the Law, but deſire to have you circumciſed that they may glory in your Fleſh*, Ch. 6. Ver. 12, and 13. He aſſures them that *in Jeſus Chriſt neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion*

ſior, but a new Creature, Ch. 6. ver. 15. He urges them earneſtly to *ſtand faſt in their Chriſtian liberty*, and not to be *intangled again with the Yoke of Bondage*, proteſting, that *if any Man* would be *circumciſed*, *Chriſt* ſhould *profit him nothing*, but he ſhou'd become *a Debtor to fulfil the whole Law*, Ch. 5. ver. 1. He tells them alſo how he openly rebuked St. *Peter* at *Antioch* for withdrawing and ſeperating himſelf from the *Gentiles*, for fear of *them which were of the circumciſion*, Ch. 2. Ver. 12. All which and many other the like Paſſages, do ſo evidently refer to that Controverſie, *Whether the Jewiſh Religion was to be mixed with the Chriſtian, or no*, that I know not whether any one ever attempted to interpret them to any other Senſe.

4. And that thoſe other Parts alſo of theſe *Epiſtles*, which have by *ſome* been otherwiſe interpreted, ought *indeed* to be underſtood wholly to relate to the ſame Controverſie, appears ſufficiently from the Apoſtles way of arguing. For according to any other Interpretation, the *Terms*, which the Apoſtle makes uſe of, are improper; and his *reaſoning* is hard, intricate, and not concluding: As is ſufficiently evident from the difficulty that ſome Expoſitors have met with, to vindicate St. *Paul* from thwarting the main Deſign of the Goſpel, from contradicting the expreſs words of ſome other of the Apoſtles, and alſo from contradicting himſelf. But if theſe whole *Epiſtles* be underſtood to refer to that Queſtion, *Whether the Chriſtian Religion be alone ſufficient to Salvation, or whether it be neceſſary to obſerve together with it the Ceremonies alſo of the Jewiſh Law*; the *Terms*, which the Apoſtle uſes, are moſt apt and proper; and his *Reaſoning* is moſt eaſie, ſtrong and concluſive: As will moſt evidently appear from a brief view of them both.

5 The deſign then of the Apoſtle being on one hand to *magnifie* the *Chriſtian Religion*, by ſetting forth its *ſufficiency* to Salvation; and on the other hand, to demonſtrate the *inſufficiency and unneceſſarineſs* of the *ceremonial obſervances of the Jewiſh Law*; the *Terms* which he all along makes uſe of to expreſs the *Chriſtian* and *Jewiſh* Religion by, are ſuch as may beſt ſerve to *ſet forth* the *excellency* of the one, and *diminiſh* the opinion which Men had taken up of the *neceſſity* of the other. Thus becauſe the firſt and moſt fundamental Duty of the Chriſtian Religion, is *believing* in God

God, and *believing* that moſt perfect Revelation of his Will, which he has made to Mankind by our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; whereas on the contrary, the Principal part of the Jewiſh Religion, or at leaſt of that Religion which the Judaizing Chriſtians ſo earneſtly contended for, was an *anxious obſervance* of the burdenſome *Ceremonies* of the Moſaick *Law*; therefore the Apoſtle calls the Chriſtian Religion *Faith*, and the Jewiſh Religion *the Law*. Thus in the *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, ch. 3. ver. 28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is juſtified by Faith, without the deeds of the Law*; that is, it clearly appears from what has been already ſaid, that Obedience to the *Chriſtian Religion* is ſufficient to juſtifie a Man, without obſerving the Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh*: And *ver.* 31. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea we eſtabliſh the Law*; that is, Do we then, as ſome Men obiect, by our preaching up the *Chriſtian Religion* make void the *Law of God*, or that *Revelation of his Will* which he made to the *Jews*; No, we are ſo far from that, that by introducing *Chriſtianity* we eſtabliſh, confirm, and perfect the moral and immutable part of the Law much more effectually, than the *Jewiſh Ceremonies* were able to do. Thus likewiſe in the *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians*, *ch.* 3. ver. 2. *This only would I learn of you; Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith*; *Or*, as 'tis expreſſed, *ver.* 5. *He that miniſtreth to you the Spirit, and worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of Faith?* that is, I appeal unto your ſelves who contend ſo earneſtly for the neceſſity of keeping up the Jewiſh Ceremonies; was it by your obſerving the Rites of the *Jewiſh Religion* that ye received the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, or by your being converted to the *Chriſtian*? So alſo *ver.* 24. *The Law was our School-maſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by Faith*; that is, The Jewiſh Diſpenſation was appointed by God in condeſcention to the weakneſs of that People, to fit them by degrees for the reception of the *Chriſtian*: And ch. 2. ver. 15. The Apoſtle having rebuked St. *Peter* openly, for withdrawing himſelf from the *Gentiles* at *Antioch*, adds, *We who are Jews by nature, and not Sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might*

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be juſtified by the Faith of Chriſt, and not by the Works of the Law; that is, If we our ſelves who were brought up in the *Jewiſh Religion*, being convinced that that Religion was not able to juſtifie us in the ſight of God, have thought fit to forſake it and imbrace the *Chriſtian Religion*, in hopes to be juſtified thereby, how much leſs reaſon have you to compel the *Gentiles*, who were never brought up in the *Jewiſh Religion*, to conform themſelves to the Cuſtoms of the *Jews*, after their Converſion to *Chriſtianity*.

6. Again, becauſe the *Chriſtian Religion* teaches us to expect Salvation not from our own Merits, but from the Grace of God, that is, according to the Terms of that new and gracious Covenant, wherein God has Promiſed to accept of Sincerity inſtead of perfect Obedience; whereas on the contrary, the *Jews* depended upon their exact performance of the Works of the Law; therefore the Apoſtle calls the *Chriſtian* Religion *Grace*, and the *Jewiſh* Religion Works. Thus in the *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, ch. 11. ver. 5. *So then at this preſent time alſo, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace*; that is, tho' the Jewiſh Nation having rejected the gracious offer of the Goſpel, are thereupon rejected from being the People of God, yet has God reſerved to himſelf a Remnant from among them, even thoſe who have embraced the *Chriſtian Religion*; *And if by Grace, then is it no more of Works*; that is, and if it be upon account of their having embraced the *Chriſtian* Religion, that they are reckoned the peculiar People of God, then is not this Privilege any longer annexed to the Profeſſors of the *Jewiſh* Religion; *otherwiſe Grace is no more Grace*; that is, otherwiſe the Chriſtian Religion is in vain, and not, what it pretends to be, the Grace of God: Thus alſo, *ch. 6. ver. 14. Sin ſhall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace*; that is, ye are not under the Jewiſh Religion, but under the Chriſtian. So likewiſe in the *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians*, *ch.* 5. ver. 4. *Chriſt is become of no effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace*; that is, whoſoever will needs retain the Jewiſh Religion, he takes upon him to fulfil the whole Law, forſaking the gracious Diſpenſation of the Chriſtian Religion, and therefore Chriſt ſhall be of no effect unto him.

7. Again,

7. Again, becauſe the Duties of the Chriſtian Religion are almoſt wholly *Moral and Spiritual*, reſpecting the inward diſpoſition of the Heart and Mind; whereas on the contrary, the Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law were for the moſt part external, and as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* calls them, *Carnal Ordinances*, reſpecting chiefly the outward purification of the Body; therefore the Apoſtle calls the the Chriſtian Religion *Spirit*, and the JewiſhReligion *Fleſh*. Thus in the *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, ch. 8. ver. 3, & 4. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, and for ſin condemned ſin in the Fleſh, that the Righteouſneſs of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Fleſh but after the Spirit*; that is, whereas the Jewiſh Religion becauſe of its outward and carnal Ordinances, was weak and inſufficient to make Men truly Righteons; God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful Man to offer up himſelf a Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind, eſtabliſhed the Chriſtian Religion, which purifying throughly the whole Heart and Mind, and purging the Conſcience from dead Works, might through the Grace and Mercy of God avail to juſtifie Men from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law. Thus alſo in the *Epiſtle* to the *Galatians*, ch. 3. ver. 3. *Are ye ſo fooliſh, Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the Fleſh?* that is, Are ye ſo fooliſh as to think that after ye have embraced the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, you can become yet more perfect by obſerving the Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law?

8. Theſe are the *Terms* which the Apoſtle expreſſes the Chriſtian and Jewiſh Religion by in theſe *Epiſtles*: And according to this interpretation, the ſubſtance of both theſe *Epiſtles* may clearly be reſolved into certain Arguments, by which the Apoſtle plainly and ſtrongly proves, againſt the Judaizing Believers, that Obedience to the Chriſtian Religion is ſufficient to Salvation, without obſerving the Ceremonies of the Jewiſh.

9. His firſt Argument is this: the Jewiſh Religion having proved inſufficient to make Men truly good, as the *Natural* Religion had before done, there was a neceſſity of ſetting up another Inſtitution of Religion, which might be

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more available and effectual to that End: now the setting up a new Institution of Religion necessarily implying the abolishing of the old, it follows that *Christianity*, was not to be added to *Judaism*, but that *Judaism* was to be changed into *Christianity*, that is that the Jewish ceasing, the Christian was from thence forward to succeed in its room. This Argument the Apostle insists upon in the 1st, 2d, 5th, 6th and 7th Chapters to the *Romans*, and in the 1st and 4th Chapters to the *Galatians*. In the 1st and 2d Chapters of the *Epistle* to the *Romans*, he shews that the Jewish Religion had proved insufficient to make Men Holy, as *Natural* Religion had also done: In the 5th and 6th Chapters of that *Epistle* to the *Romans*, and in the 1st to the *Galatians*, he gives an account of the Institution of the Christian Religion, as more available to that End; in the 7th Chapter to the *Romans* he shews that this new Institution of Religion necessarily implies the abolishing of the old one; and this he does from the similitude of a Womans being bound by the Law to her Husband so long as he lives, but if her Husband be dead, she is free from the Law of her Husband; which Similitude he applies, *ver.* 4. *Wherefore my Brethren ye also are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God*: In the 4th Chapter to the *Galatians*, he proves the same thing from the Similitude of a young Heirs being under Governors or Tutors, *ver.* 1. *I say that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho' he be Lord of all; but is under Tutors and Governors until the time appointed of the Father; even so we when we were Children, were in bondage under the elements of the World: But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons*; that is, The Jewish Law was an Institution of Religion adapted by God in great Condescention to the weak Apprehensions of that People; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to institute a more perfect Form of Religion, after the settlement of which in the world the former Dispensation was to be *disannulled, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

10. The second Argument, by which the Apostle proves that the Christian Religion is sufficient to justifie a Man, without

out mixing therewith the Rites of the Jewiſh, is this: The Summ and Eſſence of all Religion, is Obedience to the moral and eternal Law of God; ſince therefore the Ceremonies of the Jewiſh Law were inſtituted only for that very reaſon, that they might promote this great End, and prepare Mens Hearts for the reception of that more perfect Inſtitution of Religion, wherein God was to be worſhipp'd and obey'd in Spirit and in Truth; 'tis manifeſt, that when this perfect Inſtitution of Religion was ſettled, the former, which was deſigned for no other reaſon but to be preparatory to this, muſt be aboliſhed. This Argument the Apoſtle inſiſts on in the 2d Chapter to the *Romans*, and in the 3d to the *Galatians*: In the 2d to the *Romans* he ſhows, that every Inſtitution of Religion, and particularly the Jewiſh, was no otherwiſe of any eſteem in the ſight of God, then as it promoted that great end of Obedience to his Moral and Eternal Law: *For Circumciſion*, ſaith he, *verily profiteth if thou keep the Law; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumciſion is made Uncircumciſion; Therefore if the Uncircumciſion keep the Righteouſneſs of the Law; ſhall not his Uncircumciſion be counted for Circumciſion? And ſhall not Uncircumciſion, which is by nature, if it keep the Law, judge thee who by the Letter and Circumciſion doſt tranſgreſs the Law? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumciſion which is outward in the fleſh; But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the heart in the ſpirit and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of Men but of God*, v. 25. to the end. In the 3d to the *Galatians* he argues, that the *Jewiſh* Religion having been thus inſtituted only to prepare Men for that Obedience to the Eternal Law of God, which was to be the ſum and eſſence of the *Chriſtian* Religion; it follows, that when this latter and more perfect Inſtitution took place, there was no need of continuing the former: *The Law*, ſaith he, *was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions, till the Seed ſhould come, to whom the Promiſe was made*, v. 19. And v. 23. *Before Faith came, we were kept under the Law, ſhut up unto the Faith which ſhould afterward be revealed; Wherefore the Law was our School-maſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by Faith; But after that Faith is come, we are no longer under a School-maſter.*

11. The Third Argument which the Apoſtle makes uſe of to prove that thoſe who were converted to the *Chriſtian* Religion

gion were not bound any longer to obſerve the *Jewiſh*, is this: The Religion of *Abraham* was ſuch a Religion, as was acceptable to God, and available to Juſtification; but now the Religion of *Abraham* was the ſame with the *Chriſtian* Religion, conſiſting only of *Faith and Obedience* without the *works of the Jewiſh Law*; (For the Scripture ſaith expreſly, that *the Goſpel was Preached before unto* Abraham, and that *his Faith was reckoned unto him for Righteouſneſs, when he was not in Circumciſion, but in Uncircumciſion*;) It follows therefore, that the Faith & Obedience of the *Chriſtian* Religion ſhall be imputed unto us for Righteouſneſs, without the works of the *Jewiſh* Law. This Argument the Apoſtle largely and ſtrongly inſiſts upon in the whole 4th Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and in the 3d to the *Galatians*: as you may there read at large.

12. The fourth and laſt Argument, by which the Apoſtle proves that the *Chriſtian* Religion is ſufficient to Salvation without retaining the *Jewiſh*, is this: The Poſterity of *Abraham* were the Elect and the peculiar People of God; But by the Poſterity of *Abraham* is not meant ſtrictly thoſe who deſcend from *Abraham according to the fleſh*, but *the Children of the Promiſe*, (that is, *as many as are of the Faith of* Abraham,) *ſhall be counted for the Seed*: The true Religion therefore and Service of God, is not confined to the *Jewiſh* Nation, who are the Poſterity of *Abraham* according to the fleſh, but *the Gentiles alſo which believe, have attained to Righteouſneſs which is of Faith*; that is, thoſe of all Nations, as well *Gentiles* as *Jews*, who embrace the *Chriſtian* Religion, which is the ſame with the Religion of *Abraham*, ſhall be juſtified with faithful *Abraham*. And this Argument the Apoſtle inſiſts upon in the 9th, 10th, and 11th Chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and in the 4th to the *Galatians*.

13. This is Sum of the Arguments, which the Apoſtle makes uſe of in theſe two Epiſtles, to prove againſt the *Judaizing Chriſtians*, that there was no neceſſity of retaining the *Jewiſh* Religion together with the *Chriſtian*. And from the largeneſs, clearneſs, and ſtrength of theſe Arguments, 'tis evident that the determination of this Queſtion is *indeed* the principal ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle in theſe Epiſtles. For nothing can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe, that the Apoſtle ſhould moſt ſtrongly and largely demonſtrate a thing, which was not really the deſign of his diſcourſe

courſe; or that on the other hand he ſhould make a thing the profeſſed Subject of his diſcourſe, and yet prove it by ſuch intricate and obſcure Arguments, as the wiſeſt and cunningeſt of Men ſhould never be able to reconcile, either with the reſt of the Scripture, or with themſelves.

14. We muſt not therefore ſo underſtand any paſſages in theſe Epiſtles, as if the Apoſtle deſigned to magnifie *one* Chriſtian Virtue in oppoſition to *all* or *any* of the reſt; but only that he would ſet forth the Perfection of the Virtues of the *Chriſtian* Religion, without the Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh*. Thus when he tells us, that we are *juſtified by Faith without Works*, we muſt not interpret it of the *Faith* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, in oppoſition to the *Works* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, but of the *Faith* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, in oppoſition to the *Works* of the *Jewiſh*. For ſo the Apoſtle himſelf moſt expreſly explains it, Gal. 5. 6 *In Chriſt Jeſus neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but Faith which worketh by Love*; that is, it matters not whether a Man obſerves the *Works* of the *Jewiſh* Religion or no, if he maintains but the *Faith*, and the *Obedience* of the *Chriſtian*. But as to the *Works* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, the ſame Apoſtle every where urgeth *their* neceſſity, and particularly the *five* laſt Chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Romans* are a moſt earneſt exhortation to be fruitful therein.

15. From which it follows moſt evidently, that there is no contradiction between St. *Paul* and St. *James*, when the one ſays, that a Man *is juſtified by Faith without Works*, and the other ſaith that *Faith without works cannot juſtifie*. For the one ſpeaking profeſſedly of the *Works of the Jewiſh Religion*, and the other of the *Works of the Chriſtian*, 'tis plain that the *Faith of the Chriſtian Religion* may avail to juſtifie a Man without the *Works of the Jewiſh Religion*, (which is the Aſſertion of St *Paul*;) tho' it cannot do ſo without the *Works of the Chriſtian Religion*, (which is the Aſſertion of St *James*.) The *Faith* of *Abraham*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs*; that is, his *Faith* was accepted without *Circumciſion*, and without obſerving the *external Rites of the Law*: But it was by *Works*, ſaith St. *James*, that *Abraham our Father was juſtified*; that is, it was by real *Obedience* to the moral and eternal Law of God, ſuch as is now required by the Chriſtian Religion, that his *Faith* was made available to Juſtification.

cation. So that there is no other difference beeween these two great Apostles, than as if a Man should say, That *believing the Christian Religion* is sufficient to Salvation, without *obeying the Jewish Religion*, but that it cannot be so without *obeying the Christian.*

16. From all which 'tis plain, that the Doctrine of St. *Paul* concerning *Faith and Works*, delivered in his Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, is so far from contradicting what I have laid down in the foregoing Chapter, concerning the True Notion of Religion in general, (namely, that *the Essence and End of all true Religion is Obedience to the Moral and Eternal Law of God*,) that on the contrary nothing does more clearly and more strongly confirm it.

CHAP. V.

Of the Duties of Religion in particular.

1. THirdly, *Endeavour to gain a clear and distinct Knowledge of the particular Duties of Religion.* Tis not sufficient to understand *in general* wherein True Religion consists, and to have right Notions concerning its Obligations *in general*; but we must also consider the *Particulars* of our Duty, and view them distinctly under some proper Heads. Many there are who have right and true Notions concerning the Nature of Religion in general, who understand well enough and are convinced that the only thing that can be accepted in the sight of God, is Holiness of Life, and Universal Obedience to all his Commands; who yet contenting themselves with this slight, general, and superficial Knowledge, and never giving themselves time to meditate seriously on the several particular Branches of their Duty, are very apt to impose upon themselves with a partial Obedience; ad while they satisfie their own Minds with some loose and general Considerations, *that their Lives are Religious in the main*, that *they have a general esteem for Virtue and Religion*, and that *they hate Profaneness and professed Irreligion*, they make a shift to live in the habitual Practice of some great Sin, or in the constant neglect of some important Duty.

2. My design is not in this short Essay to make a large and particular Deduction of all the the several Branches

ches of our Chriſtian Duty. This has already been fully and excellently done by ſome of our own Writers. I ſhall only lay down the chief Particulars of our Duty under ſome briefHeads, which may be eaſily remembred and carried conſtantly in Mind, as perpetual *Memorials* of what upon all occaſions we muſt remember our ſelves to be abſolutely and indiſpenſably obliged to: And they ſhall be theſe Three.

3. Firſt, *That we ought to be always devout towards God, with the profoundeſt Veneration of Mind poſſible, and to ſeek all opportunities of expreſſing that Devotion.* By this Rule is commanded Faith in God, Truſt and Dependance upon him, Submiſſion and Reſignedneſs to his Will, Fear and Love of him, Zeal for his Honour, Prayer and Thankfulneſs to him, and a conſcientious Attendance upon his Worſhip and Ordinances: And by it is forbidden, Blaſphemy and Profaneneſs, Superſtition and Idolatry, Witchcraft and Conſulting with ſuch as are reputed to have skill in any evil Art, Perjury and vain Swearing, Unbelief and Diſtruſt of God, want of Zeal for his Honour, Unthankfulneſs and Neglect of Prayer, Careleſſneſs in Religion and Neglecting to attend upon the Publick Worſhip.

4. Secondly. *That we ought conſtantly to indeavour in the whole Courſe of our Lives, to promote the Good and the Happineſs of all Men.* By this Rule is commanded Honour and Reverence, Fidelity and Obedience towards thoſe who are our Superiors; Goodneſs and Kindneſs, Affability and Courteouſneſs, Juſtice and Honeſty, Gentleneſs and Candour, Meekneſs and Peaceableneſs, Forgiveneſs of Injuries, and a Deſire of doing all poſſible Kindneſſes to thoſe who are our Equals; Pity and Succour, Mercifulneſs and Compaſſion, Alms and Beneficence, Inſtruction and Aſſiſtance, and all manner of Help and Encouragement to thoſe who are our Inferiors: And by it is forbidden, Diſobedience and Rebellion, Traiterouſneſs and Speaking Evil of Dignities; Murder and Stealing, Extortion and Fraud, Perfidiouſneſs and Lying, Oppreſſion and Over-reaching, Calumny and Evil-ſpeaking, Hatred and Revenge, Sourneſs and Unkindneſs, Anger and Paſſion, Peeviſhneſs and Illnature, Sullenneſs and Moroſeneſs, Diſcord and Unpeaceableneſs, Cruelty and Uncharitableneſs, Pride and Haughtineſs, and Unconcernedneſs at the Wants and Miſeries of Others.

5. 3dly, *That we ought to be Temperate and Abſtemious in the uſe of all Temporal Enjoyments, as Soldiers of Chriſt, and Candidates for Heaven; as thoſe who look for their Portion not in the Pleaſures of this World, but in the Happineſs of the other.* By this Rule is commanded Temperance and Sobriety, Chaſtity and Purity, Contentment and Contempt of the World, Patience and Watchfulneſs, Mortification and Self-Denial, Heavenly-mindedneſs and Humility: And by it is forbidden, Gluttony and Drunkenneſs, Adultery and Fornication, Uncleanneſs and Laſciviouſneſs, Voluptuouſneſs and Senſuality, Covetouſneſs and Ambition, Idleneſs and Softneſs, Impatience and Diſcontent.

6. This is the Summ of the Duties, which every one who will in earneſt dedicate himſelf to the Service of God, and ſeriouſly enter upon a Religious Courſe of Life, *muſt reſolve* to perform. Whoever will *bear his Croſs and come after* Chriſt, muſt firſt conſider, whether for the ſake of *God and Religion*, he can be able to bear the Scorn and Contempt of Impious and Prophane Men, and ſuffer all things rather than be compelled to do any thing to the diſhonour of his God; he muſt conſider whether for the ſake of *Juſtice and Charity* he can be able to ſacrifice his deareſt Intereſts, to conquer his moſt natural Paſſions, and to deſpiſe the Glory and Splendour of the World; and he muſt ask himſelf, whether for the ſake of *Temperance and Purity*, he can be able to mortifie his moſt darling Luſts, and as a reſolute follower of a Crucified Saviour, contemn all the Pleaſures of Fleſh and Senſe: For unleſs he can peremptorily reſolve with himſelf to do all this, his Profeſſion of Religion will certainly be in vain, and he *cannot be the Diſciple* of Chriſt. *Which of you*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *intending to build a Tower, ſitteth not down firſt, and counteth the coſt, whether he have ſufficient to finiſh it? Leſt haply after he has laid the Foundation, and is not able to finiſh it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ſaying, This Man began to build, and was not able to finiſh. Or what King going to make War againſt another King, ſitteth not down firſt, and conſulteth whether he be able with ten thouſand, to meet him that cometh againſt him with twenty thouſand? So likewiſe, whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh not all that he hath*, that is, who does not reſolve with himſelf to perform his Duty, whatever it may coſt him, *he cannot be my Diſciple*, Luke 14. 28, &c.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

What is to be done at Confirmation: Of ſolemnly renewing the Baptiſmal Vow.

1. WHen a Perſon is thus arrived to a *firm Belief of the great Truths of Religion*; When he *Underſtands diſtinctly the Extent and Obligation of his Duty*; and is come to a *ſettled Reſolution of conducting the whole courſe of his Life, according to that Knowledge*; then is it that he becomes truly *meet for the Kingdom of God*, and is rightly prepared to make a ſolemn Profeſſion of his being a Diſciple of Chriſt. Which the Church has wiſely ordained ſhould be done publickly at Confirmation: where by *Ratifying with our own Mouth the Vow made in our Name by our Sureties*, we ſolemnly take upon our ſelves to perform all *the Duties, which the Condition of our Baptiſmal Covenant obliges us to obſerve*; and by Impoſition of Hands, (according to the conſtant practice of the Church ſince the times of the Apoſtle) we have ſealed and Confirmed to us all the *Privileges, which the condition of the ſame Baptiſmal Covenant intitles us to receive.*

2 *Firſt* therefore, *at* receiving Confirmation, *Conſider that you now Solemnly undertake for your ſelf to perform all the Duties which the Condition of your Baptiſmal Covenant obliges you to obſerve.* Conſider that you now confirm and ratifie, all that your Sureties promiſed and vowed for you at your Baptiſm. Conſider that you now ingage in your own Perſon, *To renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Pomps and Vanities of this Wicked World, and all the ſinful Luſts of the Fleſh*; that you now ingage *to ſtand firm in the Belief of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and never to be aſhamed to confeſs the Faith of Chriſt crucified, or afraid to own your ſelf his Diſciple*: and that you now ingage *to obey from henceforward all the Commandments of God*, that is, *to live* (with all the Strictneſs and Purity of the Goſpel) *in the conſtant Practice of every one of* thoſe *Duties*, of which I have briefly ſet down the Heads in the former Chapter.

3. And conſider, that you promiſe all this *moſt ſolemnly, in the Preſence of God and before the whole Congregation.* Conſider, that you enter into this Promiſe with *ſuch ſolem-*

nity, as lays upon you the ſtrongeſt poſſible Obligations to Virtue: Conſider that you *ſo* enter into this Promiſe with *Knowledge and Deliberation*; that if you ſhall afterwards fall into any Courſe of ſin, in contempt of ſuch repeated Obligations to the contrary, the Guilt thereof will be extreamly increaſed; and that therefore you ought *now* to affect your Mind *deeply* with a ſence of the heinouſneſs of ſin, and to ſtrengthen *mightily* your good Reſolutions. Antiently, every one that was baptized, was taught to look upon himſelf as entring into ſo ſolemn an Obligation of Religion, that if after *that Great and Sacred Vow* he ſhould fall into any wilful and known ſin, it could not be forgiven him but upon a proportionably *great and long Repentance*: And the ſame Reaſon there is now, why every one that by Confirmation dedicates himſelf to the Service of God, and makes publick Profeſſion of his being a Diſciple of Chriſt, ſhould look upon himſelf as entring into ſuch a ſolemn Obligation, as ſhould make him exceeding fearful of falling for the future into any great ſin, the Guilt of which will be extreamly increaſed by being committed after ſuch repeated Vows and Promiſes to the contrary.

4. Yet is this no Reaſon why any one ſhould defer being *Confirmed*, as if by omitting to bind himſelf by this New and Solemn Promiſe, he might continue to ſin with leſs guilt and leſs danger. For though the guilt of ſin be indeed mightily increaſed, by being committed after repeated Obligations to the contrary; yet if any one omits to renew his Obligations, only for that reaſon, that he may continue in ſin, his ſin is then equally heinous and againſt Knowledge, as if he had renewed his Obligation. *Baptiſm* is a ſolemn Obligation to be Religious; and many of the Antients, becauſe they thought ſin would be more heinous after ſo ſolemn an Obligation, did therefore defer to be Baptized till the end of their Lives. *The Lord's Supper* is alſo a ſolemn Obligation to be Religious: and many in our days, becauſe they think ſin will be more heinous after ſo ſolemn an Obligation, do therefore defer receiving the Communion, all there Lives. But 'tis plain theſe men run into a very great Errour. For the reaſon why ſin after repeated Obligations to the contrary, becomes more heinous, is becauſe it is committed with greater *Deliberation* and againſt clearer *Convictions*. When therefore a Man who believes Religi-

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on, and *Underſtands* its Obligations, omits theſe Duties for no other reaſon, but that he may ſin (as he thinks) with leſs danger; his ſins are then equally *deliberate*, and againſt equally *clear Knowledge*; and he moreover adds to them a *contemptuous neglect*, of the means of becoming more Religious.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Certainty of God's Grace, and the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit.

1. SEcondly, *Conſider that you come now to have Sealed and Confirmed to you all the Privileges, which the Condition of your Baptiſmal Covenant intitles you to receive.* At *Baptiſm* we are admitted into the Church of God, and have a Title to the Graces and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; and at *Confirmation* this Grace is ſealed and aſſured to us, by the external Sign of Impoſition of Hands. When therefore you come in this ſolemn manner to make Profeſſion of your Religion, and to dedicate your ſelf to the Service of God, be ſure to come with *earneſt deſires*, and a *longing Soul*, with a *firm Faith*, and a *well-aſſured Hope*, with a *pure Heart*, and a *Mind prepared for the reception of the Holy Ghoſt*; and God will not fail to pour down upon you the *abundance of his Grace*, to give you ſtrength from thenceforward to overcome both the *inward corruption of your Nature*, and the *outward temptations of the World and the Devil*; to inable you to continue firm in the *Faith of Chriſt*, and in the *Obedience of his Commands*; to preſerve you always from the *Dominion of Sin*, and to bring you ſafe unto his *Kingdom of Glory*.

2. There is nothing more pernitious to the Souls of Men, than an Opinion of the *Uncertainty of the Grace of God*, and its not being annexed conſtantly to the uſe of means. If we imagine that our *Nature is ſo utterly corrupted*, that we can no more *do or will* any thing that is good than a dead Body can move, or bring it ſelf to Life, till we be acted by ſuch a mighty and extraordinary Grace of God, as nothing *that we can do* can in the leaſt prepare us to receive; If we imagine that the *Temptations* of the *World and the Devil* are ſo *ſtrong*, that we cannot poſſibly over-

come them without ſuch a powerful Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, as God has not annexed to the uſe of any *Ordinances* or *Means* of Religion; If we imagine that the *Commandments* of God are ſo *impoſſible* to be kept, that after all we can do, we muſt ſit ſtill in expectation of being *converted* ſuddenly by an *irreſiſtible Grace*; this muſt needs make all our Indeavours *weak* and *faint*, *dead* and *without heart*, and we ſhall certainly never be able to *overcome our Temptations* and to *Perſevere in Well-doing*.

3. It muſt indeed be confeſſed, that the *Corruption of our Nature* is really ſo great, that we *cannot do any thing as of our ſelves*, 2 Cor. 9. 5. It muſt be confeſſed, that the Temptations of the *World* and *the Devil* are really ſo ſtrong, that we can never, meerly by our own ſtrength, be able to *ſtand and Perſevere unto the end*: it muſt be confeſſed, that the *Commandment* of God is ſo *exceeding broad*, that by all that we can do by our own power, we can never *be juſtified in the ſight of God*. But then if our Saviour *has* deliver'd us from this Corruption of our Nature, and *has* broken all the Powers of Sin and Satan: If Chriſt by his Death *has* purchaſed this Grace for us, that upon our attending the Ordinances and Means of Religion which he hath appointed, God will as certainly beſtow upon us the ſufficient Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, as a tender Father cannot deny his Child any reaſonable Requeſt: If *God will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will, with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. and whenever he requires more of us than we are naturally able to perform, will certainly afford us an extraordinary Aſſiſtance proportionable to the difficulty we are obliged to encounter; (as he conſtantly did to the Primitive Chriſtians, who through the mighty Power of the Spirit were enabled to bear all the moſt exquiſite Torments, that either *the wit of Man*, or the *Malice of the Devil* could invent, with leſs concern than we can even indure to hear or read of them:) If all this, I ſay, be true, 'tis evident, that if notwithſtanding this we ſtill continue in Wickedneſs, all theſe ſpecious Pretences will by no means excuſe us, but we ſhall be found to have *done deſpite unto the* Spirit *of Grace*, and to have *neglected* our *great Salvation*.

4. Think not therefore that the Corruption of your Nature is greater, than that Grace and Aſſiſtance which God

now

now affords you; for ſo you may ſit ſtill under the Dominion of ſin, in a vain expectation of being converted by ſome ſudden and All-powerful *Grace* of God, till you be ſurprized by the *Revelation of his righteous Judgment*: But know, that to all thoſe who are *Baptized in his Name*, and who *Profeſs and Endeavour to obey his Commandments*, God *doth give both to will and to do of his good Pleaſure*; and therefore you are from henceforward indiſpenſably bound, to *work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. Think not that the Temptations of the World and the Devil, are more powerful than that ſtrength wherewith God *now* indues you; For ſo you will be ſure to be overcome by them: But know, that our Saviour has *Overcome the World and the Devil*, ſo that they have no more power over the Servants of God; and therefore *we* are bound to overcome them alſo, and to be *more than Conquerours through him that loved us*, Rom. 8. 37. Think not that the Commandments of God are hard and impoſſible to be kept; For ſo you will certainly not be able to keep them: But know, that thro' Chriſt who *now* ſtrengthens you, you may make them eaſie, and light and pleaſant; and therefore you are from henceforward indiſpenſably obliged to keep them.

5. Theſe are the Qualifications, with which a Perſon ought to come to *Confirmation*, that he may receive it with Advantage and Profit. I ſhall now give ſome briet Directions, how one that has thus ſolemnly entred into the Profeſſion of Religion, may continue to live worthy of that Holy Profeſſion.

CHAP. VIII.

What is to be done after *Confirmation. Of Perſeverance; and of the danger of Apoſtacy.*

1. AND Firſt, *Perſuade your ſelf of the neceſſity of Perſevering in the conſtant Practice of Religion and Virtue, from this Period.* The *Primitive Chriſtians* thought themſelves abſolutely obliged, to live in the conſtant Practice of all Holineſs and Virtue, from the time of their Baptiſm to their Death: And if *We* have taken upon our ſelves the *ſame* Baptiſmal Vow; if *We* have entred into

the *ſame* Profeſſion of Religion; *We* ought alſo from that time forward to have the *ſame* Apprehenſions. Think not that the making a *Publick and Solemn Profeſſion of Religion* will be of any advantage to you, unleſs the following part of your Life be *ſuitable to* and *worthy of* that Profeſſion. Think not that your preſent Zeal and warmth of Devotion will ſtand you in any ſtead, unleſs it work in you ſuch a laſting Diſpoſition of Mind, as will afterwards, when Temptation and Trial ſhall ſucceed, preſerve you ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the performance of your Duty.

2. The Chriſtian Life is a Spirittual *Warfare*, wherein we muſt fight *againſt* the *Temptations* of *this* World, *for* the *Glories* of *the other*; and the Reward is promiſed, not to him that ſhall *fight*, but to him that ſhall *overcome*. We are told, that many ſhould embrace the Doctrine of Chriſt, and *receive* his *Word* even *with joy*; but becauſe *in time of Temptation* they would *fall away*, it ſhould profit them nothing to have once been Believers. This whole Life, is a ſtate of Tryal and Probation; and however painfully we have laboured, yet if we leave off before our Work be done, we muſt loſe our Reward. *They that run in a race*, 1 Cor. 9. 24. ſaith the Apoſtle, *run all*; but 'tis not they that *run*, but they that *continue* to run without fainting to the end, that ſhall obtain the Crown. Men are exceeding apt to deceive themſelves with an imagination, that ſome warm of fits Devotion, the doing now and then a work of Charity, and the abſtaining from Sin for ſome time, when perhaps the Temptation is leſs violent than ordinary, will be look'd upon as the running the Chriſtian Race: But let no Man deceive himſelf with vain Imaginations. This is indeed *running*, but not ſo as to *obtain*; this is indeed *fighting*, but not ſo as to *conquer*, but to *be overcome*. 'Tis not the *ſtruggling* with Sin, or the *interrupting* a wicked Life by ſome ſhort-lived Repentance, that will intitle us to a Crown of Righteouſneſs; but we *muſt overcome*, and we muſt *evidence* our Victory by a ſteady courſe of Piety, or our Labour will prove to be in vain.

3. Many there are, who upon ſome affecting Diſcourſe, or ſome remarkable Providence, or ſome occaſional warmth of Devotion, do pleaſe themſelves with good Reſolutions, do admire the Pleaſures of Virtue, and with a tranſporting glimpſe of the Joys of Holineſs, do imagine them-

themſelves almoſt at the Gates of Heaven; and yet when the Fit is over, the Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulneſs of Riches, and the Luſts of other Things returning upon them, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful; and all their Pious Intervals ſerve to no other purpoſe, but to make their Miſery ſo much the more lamentable and deplorable, by how much they have come nearer to the Kingdom of God, and have been *almoſt* upon the point of making themſelves Happy. What pity is it, that they who have had a *taſte* of *the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, ſhould for want of being able to withſtand the Allurements of ſome trifling Pleaſure, or for want of Reſolution to incounter ſome ſhort and temporal Hardſhip, forfeit all their glorious Hopes of Happineſs, and loſe the Crown of Immortatily. Yet that they *muſt* do ſo if their Love wax cold, and they be offended at the appearance of any Temptation, the Scripture every where moſt expreſly aſſures us.

4. *He that endureth to the end*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved*, Matth. 24 13. *But if any one draw back, my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him*, Heb. 10. 38. For *no Man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is meet for the the Kingdom God*, Luke 9. 62. *Not* every one that ſaith unto him, Lord, Lord; *not* every one that embraces his Religion, and makes Profeſſion of it; nay, *not* every one that receiveth his Word with gladneſs, and obeys it for a time, even with Sincerity; but he that with an unwearied conſtancy maintains his Reſolutions, and in the midſt of all Temptations preſerves his Integrity to the end; *he* only has a certain Title to our Saviour's Promiſe.

5. And to the ſame purpoſe the Apoſtle St *Paul*, *Rom.* 2. 7. aſſures the Promiſe of Eternal Life, *not* to thoſe who ſhall *begin* to do well, or to thoſe who ſhall *by fits*, and at certain times, do ſome works of Righteouſneſs; but to *thoſe* only, who ſhall *perſevere* in a ſteady courſe of Piety; to *them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality.* And again, *Heb.* 3. 14. he tells us, that we *are made partakers of Chriſt, if we hold the beginning of our Confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end.* The *Hebrews*, to whom this Epiſtle was written, were certainly ſincere Chriſtians; they had been *enlightned* by *Baptiſm*

and the preaching of the Word; they had *tasted the good Word of God*, and the *Powers of the World to come*; and yet the Apostle tells them, that all this would not make them *partakers of Christ*; i. e. would not intitle them to the Promises which the Gospel makes to Obedience, unless they persevered in this state to the end, Nay, so far would all these glorious Things be from ascertaining them of Happiness, that if they fell away, the having formerly been partakers of so great Privileges would but increase their Condemnation, and make their State more desperate.

6. Terrible are the Threatnings which the Scripture makes to those, who having known their Duty and begun to obey it, shall again return to a course of Wickedness. *If after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they shall be again intangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning: For it had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them*, 2 Pet. 2. 20. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this; how that the Lord having saved the People out of the Land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not: And the Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting Chains under darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day*, Jude 5, & 6. *Lest there be any Fornicator or profane Person, as Esau, who for one morsel of Meat sold his birth-right; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*, Heb. 12. 16. *If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversary*, Heb. 10. 26. *It is impossible for those who were once enlightned, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance; seeing they crucifie to themselves the Son of God a-fresh, and put him to an open shame*, Heb. 6. 4. The meaning of all which

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Places is plainly this, not indeed that 'tis impoſſible to obtain Forgiveneſs, but that there is no more *Baptiſm*, no more *Baptiſmal Remiſſion*; and that therefore if Men after the clear Knowledge of their Duty, relapſe any more into a ſtate of groſs Wickedneſs, they cannot be forgiven but upon ſuch a *great and active Repentance*, as 'tis *exceeding difficult* to renew ſuch Perſons unto.

7. For this Reaſon our Saviour warns us to *watch*, and to be *ready always*, to have our *Loins girded about* and *our Lights burning*, and to be *like Men that wait for their Lord when he ſhall rerurn from the Wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediatly*, Luke 12. 35. And again, *Take heed to your ſelves, leſt at any time your Hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting, and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this Life, and ſo that Day come upon you unawares; for as a Snare ſhall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole Earth: Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man*, Luke 21. 34. And the Apoſtles alſo in their Epiſtles, are perpetually warning us to *watch* and to be *ſolicitous*, to take great *heed* (as of a thing of moſt extreme danger) *leſt at any time we fail of the Grace of God, and leſt any Root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble us, and thereby we be defiled.*

8. And indeed the ancient Church thought they could never carry this Point too far. To the *Converts* who had *newly* entered into the Profeſſion of Religion, they always urged the neceſſity of *Perſeverance* with the utmoſt Rigour: And thoſe Texts of Scripture, which ſeem the moſt ſeverely to threaten *Apoſtates*; that is, *ſuch as after their embracing the Truth of the Goſpel, wilfully relapſed into the practice of any notorious Wickedneſs*, they always interpreted to them in the moſt ſtrict Senſe, that by thoſe Terrors of the Lord they might preſerve them (if poſſible) in their *Innocence*; though thoſe who had already ſinned they treated more mildly, that they might incourage *Repentance* and prevent *Deſpair*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of Innocence and early Piety.

1. SEcondly, *Conſider the ineſtimable advantage of Innocence and of an early Piety.* Innocence is a Jewel which no Man underſtands the value of, and no Man knows what he does when he firſt parts with it. When a Man is firſt beaten from his good Reſolutions, and ſeduced by the Temptations of Sin and Folly, he is then driven from his beſt *ſtrong-hold*; his *Strength*, his *Courage*, his *Aſſiſtance* is diminiſhed; and *when* or *how far* he ſhall be able to recover them, he cannot tell. When a Man is firſt enticed to ſin wilfully and againſt knowledge, he makes Shipwrack of a *good Conſcience*, and parts with that *Peace of Mind*, which how far he ſhall ever be able to recover, he cannot know. When a Man is firſt vanquiſh'd by the Enemies of his Salvation, the World, the Fleſh, or the Devil; and prefers any Pleaſure, or any Intereſt to his Duty; he then forfeits his Title to the *Crown* promiſed to thoſe who ſhall *overcome*; and how far his Endeavours will afterwards be accepted, he cannot tell.

2. While a Perſon who has entered early into the Profeſſion of Religion, is yet innocent and uncorrupted with Vice; he begins his Chriſtian Warfare with *firm and unbroken Reſolutions*, with a *free and undiſtracted Mind*, and with the *certain Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit*: But when once he has forfeited this happy Innocence, and is fallen from his firſt Love; his *Zeal for Virtue* grows leſs *ſtrict*, and his *hatred againſt Vice* leſs *ſevere*; his *Reſolutions* become weaker *and more inconſtant*, his *Paſſions ſtronger*, and his *Mind more unſettled*; and the Grace of God proportionably *withdrawn* from him; ſo that it becomes much more difficult to *recover* his firſt State, than it had been to *preſerve* it. Think not therefore, when firſt Temptations offer themſelves, that you can *now* yield to them, and *afterwards* return to your Duty: (For if your Reſolutions when *firmeſt*, are not able to reſiſt, much leſs will they do it when they have oncebeen *broken*; if you can't withſtand the Temptations of Vice while it is *yet at a diſtance*, much leſs will you be able to do it when it has *intereſted* your

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Paſſions and inſinuated it ſelf into your Affections; if you cannot maintain your Ground while the Spirit of God is ready conſtantly to aſſiſt you, much leſs will you do it when he has withdrawn himſelf from you:) But reſolve bravely *now*, *while it is called to Day*, while you have Time and may do it with the greateſt Advantages, to make your Religion eaſie and your Happineſs *ſecure*; ſet out with a mighty Reſolution in the Chriſtian Race, and *preſs forward towards the Mark of the Prize of the high Calling*: Deſpiſe all the Temptations of the *World*, and the *Fleſh*; and reſiſt the *Devil*, and he will flee from you.

3. Again, while one who has early entered into the Profeſſion of Religion, maintains his Integrity, and ſtands firm againſt all the Temptations of Sin and Satan; he carries with him not only a *quiet Conſcience* and an *undiſturbed Mind*, but ſuch a full *Aſſurance and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, as inables him to perform his Duty not only *willingly but cheerfully*, and to deſpiſe all the Temptations of this preſent World as *Vanity and Nothing*: But when once he has made Shipwrack of a good Conſcience, and is overcome by the Temptations of the World and the Devil, to ſin in any groſs and notorious Inſtances; then *Fears* and *Doubts*, *Anxieties* and *Scruples*, muſt be his Portion; and though by Repentance he may recover a *well grounded Hope*, and through the Mercy of God a *certain expectation* of pardon, yet not eaſily *the aſſurance and joy* of Innocence. Think not therefore, when you are tempted by Sin, that you may *now* yield to its Solicitations, and *afterwards* by Repentance recover your firſt peace and quiet of Conſcience: (For when once the ſupport of a good Conſcience is loſt, *Obedience* will be much more difficult; and *Peace* will not return, but after much *Labour* and many *Fears*, after great *Sorrow* and long *Doubts*: But *reſolve now* to reſiſt the *very firſt* Motions of Sin; and *be convinced* there is no *Pleaſure* but in a good Conſcience, nor any *Joy* but in the Obedience of God's Commands.

4. Laſtly, While one who has entred betimes into the Profeſſion of Religion, continues reſolute to preſerve his Innocence, and conquers all the Temptations of Sin; he has a certain Title to that *exceeding weight of Glory*, that *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, which God has laid up for thoſe who ſhall *keep the Faith* and *patiently continue in well-doing*:

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But when once he *turns from the holy Commandment delivered unto him*, and is overcome by the inticements and allurements of Sin, he forfeits his Title to that Crown of Glory; and *to what degree* his after-endeavours will reſtore him, he cannot tell. That Repentance will procure him *Mercy* and *Pardon*, is certain; but to recover the *Reward* and the *Crown* of Innocence, it muſt be *very early and very effectual*. All that a *late Penitent* can hope for, is to obtain *forgiveneſs* and be admitted to Heaven: The *bright Crown* will be reſerved for thoſe, who have *fought the good Fight* and *overcome the World*. Think not therefore, when you are aſſaulted by Temptation, that you may *now* enjoy the Pleaſure of Sin, and afterward by Repentance attain to the *Reward of Virtue* alſo: (For tho' God hath indeed promiſed that thoſe who are *hired into the Vineyard at the eleventh Hour*, that is, who are late inſtructed in the *Religion of Chriſt*, or in the *Knowledge of their Duty*, ſhall have the ſame Reward with thoſe who have *born the Burden and Heat of the Day*; yet he has no where promiſed that thoſe who ſtand idle in the Vineyard till the eleventh hour, that is, who notwithſtanding they *believe the Goſpel* and *know their Duty*, yet defer their Repentance to the laſt, ſhall receive likewiſe the ſame Reward:) But reſolve now, as a faithful Soldier of Chriſt, to reſiſt reſolutely the Temptations of the *Devil*, to deſpiſe the Glory and Vanity of the *World*, to get above the Pleaſures of *Senſe*; and then *your Labour will* be ſure *not* to be in *vain in the Lord*.

5. 'Tis to thoſe who *thus* overcome, that thoſe great and glorious Promiſes in the *New Teſtament* are made: *Rev.* 21. 7. *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things*; and *Rev.* 3. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me in my Throne; even as I alſo overcame and am ſat down with my Father in his Throne*; and the like. *He that overcometh*; that is, He that having embraced the Goſpel of Chriſt, and being firmly perſuaded of the Truth of his Religion, continues ſtedfaſt in this *Faith* and *Obedience* thereof, in ſpight of all the Temptations of Sin and Satan to the contrary. In the Primitive Times, the great Temptation with which Chriſtians were aſſaulted, was Perſecution; by which they were tempted to deny their Saviour, and to renounce that Faith which they had once embraced by returning again to the Idolatrous Worſhip of the Heathen

then Gods: This was their peculiar Conflict and Trial; and he that in that great Trial reſiſted unto Blood, chuſing rather to endure the moſt exquiſite Torments, and to die the moſt cruel Death, than to deny Chriſt, was ſaid in a peculiar and more emphatical Senſe to have *overcome*: And to thoſe Perſons we muſt underſtand theſe great Promiſes, to be *primarily* and more *immediately* made. But that they proportionably belong to all *other* Chriſtians alſo, who in the midſt of any *other* Temptations ſhall *keep the Works* of Chriſt, and victoriouſly perſevere in their Integrity to the end, is evident: For the Promiſe is not made to him that overcometh, for that Reaſon becauſe 'tis this or that particular Temptation that he overcomes; but becauſe he maintains his integrity inviolable to the laſt, notwithſtanding the force of any Temptation to the contrary. And perhaps if we conſider the Matter cloſely, 'tis not eaſie to determine which is more difficult and ſhews a greater conſtancy of Mind, to die for the ſake of Chriſt, or to live in the conſtant contempt of all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Life; to part actually with all our temporal Goods for the Name of Chriſt, or to keep them with ſuch indifferency as if we enjoyed them not. Thoſe Perſons therefore who entring early into the Profeſſion of Religion, when their Temptations to Sin were moſt numerous and moſt powerful, continued ſtedfaſt in the Love of God and of Virtue, unmoved amidſt the perpetual *Allurements of Pleaſure*, the dazling *Vanities of Worldly Glory*, and the *manifold Deceitfulneſs* of Riches; were by the Ancients looked upon with no leſs Eſteem, than thoſe who ſuffered for the Name of Chriſt; and were thought to have a Title to as great a Reward.

6. Let thoſe who have ſtill the Time before them, and are ſo happy as not to have been yet ſeduced *thro' the deceitfulneſs of Sin*, conſider theſe things. Let *them* conſider what a Prize they have in their Hands; and let them be zealous that *no Man take their Crown*. Let them conſider, that if God and Angels rejoyce at the Converſion of *an old* and great *Sinner*, much more muſt they be pleaſed to ſee a *young* Perſon amidſt the alluring Glorries and Pleaſures of the World, bravely reſiſting all its Temptations. Let *them* conſider that *That* time, which a dying Sinner would, if it were poſſibie, give Millions of Worlds to redeem

deem, is now in their Hand; and they may make a glorious uſe of it. Let *them* conſider, that they are yet cloathed with the white Robe of Innocence; and if they be carefully never to *defile that Garment*, they may attain to a Portion among thoſe *few* who *ſhall walk with* Chriſt *in white, for they are worthy*, Rev. 3. 4. Let *them* conſider, that if they zealouſly continue to maintain their Innocence and their good Works for a few Years, they will ſoon be almoſt out of the danger of Temptation; they will eſcape the bitter Pangs of Remorſe and Repentance; they will be wholly above that greateſt of human Miſeries, the dread and horrour of Death; and may, not only without Fear, but even with exceeding Joy, expect the appearance of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at the Judgment of the great Day, and in the Glory of the World to come. Laſtly, let *them* conſider, that if they *hold faſt the confidence and rejoycing of their Hope firm unto the end*, they ſhall be intitled to all thoſe great and inconceivable promiſes, which our Saviour has made to thoſe who ſhall *overcome: To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God*, Rev. 2. 7. *He that overcometh, ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond Death*, ver. 11. *He that overcometh, the ſame ſhall be clothed in white Raiment, and I will not blot his Name out of the Book of Life, but I will confeſs his Name before my Father, and before his Angels*, Rev. 3. 5. *Him that overcometh, will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God, and He ſhall go no more out, and I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the Name of the City of my God, which is New Jeruſalem*, ver. 12. And *To him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with me, in my Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſit down with my Father in his Throne*, v. 21.

CHAP. X.

Of making Religion the principal Buſineſs of our Lives.

1. THirdly, *Reſolve to make Religion the main Scope of all your Actions, and the Principal Buſineſs of your Life.* One great reaſon, why Religion, which was the *reigning* Principle that *wholly governed* the Lives of the Primitive Chriſtians, has now ſo *little* influence upon the Actions of Men; is becauſe thoſe Holy Men *ſought firſt the*

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Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, and relied upon the Providence of God to have *all* other *things added unto* them; whereas now Men make Religion not their *firſt*, but their *laſt* care; and while their whole *Hearts and Affections* are ſet upon the things of this preſent World, they think themſelves ſufficiently Religious if they ſpend but ſome *ſmall Portions of their time* in the outward and Ceremonious Acts of Religion. But if Religion be the ſame *now*, that it was in the times of the *Primitive Chriſtians*; if the Happineſs propoſed to *us*, be the ſame for which *they* ſo painfully contended; if *our* Obligations, (excepting perhaps ſome few particular Caſes) be the ſame with *theirs*; this *ſlight*, *careleſs* and *ſuperficial* Religion, will not ſerve our turn. He that will obtain that Crown of Immortality, which God has promiſed to thoſe who Love and Obey him, muſt be *effectually* and *Subſtantially* Religious in the *main* Courſe of his Life; and he that will be ſo *truly* and *ſincerely* Religious, muſt make that Religion his *Principal* and his *firſt* Care.

2. By making Religion the *Principal Care and Study* of our Lives, I do not mean that Men ſhould withdraw themſelves from their Buſineſs and Imployments in the World, to ſpend their time anxiouſly in *Reading*, *Praying*, *Meditating* and the like: Theſe things are not the *whole*, nor the *Principal part* of Religion; and it is an *Antient* and *Notorious* Errour, to think that Men can become more truly Religious by the continued Exerciſes of a *private Retirement*, than by living Soberly, Righteouſly, and Godlily *in this World*. The Life and Subſtance of Religion, is to *have our Minds habitually poſſeſſed with the profoundeſt Veneration of the Divine Majeſty, and with a deſire of expreſſing at all proper opportunities, our Devotion to him, and our Zeal for his Honour*; To *endeavour conſtantly in the whole Courſe of our Lives, to promote the good and the happineſs of all Men*; and to *be temperate in the uſe of all earthly Enjoyments, as thoſe who expect their Happineſs, not in this World, but in the next.* This is the Eſſence of true Religion; and *Theſe* things a Man may make his *principal*, nay, even his *whole* Care, without any way *neglecting*, or in the leaſt *withdrawing* himſelf from his Secular and Worldly Buſineſs, There is no Imployment, wherein a Man may not be always doing ſomething for the *honour of God*, for

for the *good of Men*, or for the *Improvement of the Virtues of his own Mind*: There is no Buſineſs, wherein a Man may not make it his *main* Care, to act always like a good Man and a Chriſtian: There is no ſtate of Life, wherein a Man may not keep a conſtant Eye upon a future State; and ſo uſe the things of this *preſent World*, as that the great and ultimate Scope of all his Actions may always reſpect *that which is to come.*

3. And to make Religion *thus far* the principal Buſineſs of our Lives, is abſolutely and indiſpenſably neceſſary. No Man *can* overcome the Temptations of the World; No Man *can* be truly and effectually Religious; unleſs he *ſtedfaſtly* propoſes to himſelf one great Deſign of his Life, and indeavours to Act always *regularly* upon that Deſign. He muſt conſtantly keep an eye upon his *main End*; and in every thing he does, muſt be careful always to have a reſpect to *that.* Every thing he undertakes, muſt be either directly conducive to that end, or at leaſt not contrary to, and inconſiſtent with it. In a word, he muſt be True to himſelf, and to his own happineſs; and be reſolute never to be tempted to do any thing, which *he knows* he ſhall afterwards wiſh undone. For otherwiſe, if a Man acts only uncertainly, according to the preſent Appearances of things, and without any fixt deſign; it muſt needs be that every violent temptation will either ſurprize or overpower him, and his Religion will be as inconſtant as his Reſolutions: His *Life* will be at beſt, no other than a continued Circle of *ſinning and repenting*; and his *End* will be in nothing but *Uncertainties and Fears.*

CHAP. XI.

Of the Contempt of the World.

1. FOurthly, *Endeavour to get above all the Deſires of this preſent World.* This is the *hardeſt* Leſſon in Religion, but withal the moſt *neceſſary* and the moſt *uſeful.* All Wickedneſs proceeds from the immoderate deſire of ſome temporal Injoyment or other; and the *Love of the World* is moſt immediately *the Root of all Evil.* No Man ſins, but when he is ſeduced by an over-fond deſire of ſome Honour, Profit, or Pleaſure; and no Man can be ſure

ſure of preſerving his Innocence, ſo long as he is inſlaved to and under the Dominion of any of theſe Deſires. The way therefore to *lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree*, and to remove the Foundation and firſt Cauſe of our Miſery, is to *get above* all the Deſires of theſe Tranſitory Enjoyments, and to keep them perfectly in ſubjection and under the command of reaſon: We muſt be able to contemn theſe things, even where they are *Innocent*; and then we may be ſecure that they ſhall never be able, to ſeduce and intice us into any thing that is *ſinful*.

2. Now the means by which the Chriſtian Religion teaches us to do this, is not (as I have already ſaid) by retiring and withdrawing our ſelves from the World, to neglect all Buſineſs and lay aſide all Secular Cares; but by fixing our Thoughts ſtedfaſtly upon that future State which the Goſpel has clearly diſcovered to us, to fill our Minds with ſuch ſtrong and vigorous Ideas of the Happineſs of the *next World*, as will in any ſtate of Life, beget and preſerve in us a ſettled Contempt of all the Enjoyments of *this*.

3. The firſt and loweſt degree of this *Contempt of the World*, is a *Reſolution not to purchaſe any of its Injoyments with the Commiſſion of any great and known ſin.* This is the very loweſt degree of Sincerity; and the leaſt that any one, who pretends at all to be a Chriſtian, can reſolve with himſelf to do for the ſake of God and Religion. He that to purchaſe any Honour or profit, will not ſcruple to make uſe of downright Fraud, or of any Means which he himſelf knows and is convinced to be Unlawful; He that to gratifie any ſenſual Appetite, and to injoy a preſent Pleaſure, will venture directly to break a poſitive and expreſs Command; ſuch a one bids open Defiance to God and Virtue, and can hardly impoſe upon himſelf with any vain Imaginations of his being Religious.

4. The next degree of this *Contempt of the World*, is a *Willingneſs to part with all things for the ſake of Chriſt, when we cannot keep them together with our Religion.* This alſo our Saviour abſolutely requires of them that will be his Diſciples. *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple: And whoſoever doth not bear his Croſs, and come after me;*

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cannot be my Diſciple, Luke 14. 26, 27. 'Tis true, this is more peculiarly adapted to thoſe early times of the Goſpel, when 'twas impoſſible for a Man to imbrace the Doctrine of Chriſt, and profeſs himſelf his Diſciple, but he muſt immediately forſake all that he had in the World, and become poor in the moſt literal ſenſe for Chriſt's ſake: But certainly it *thus far* obliges Chriſtians at all times, and even when God does not call them to ſuffering and parting with all for his ſake, that they ought to have ſuch an indifferency for the things of this World, as to be always in a readineſs to part with whatever ſhall come in Competition with their Duty.

5. But there is yet another degree of this *Contempt of the World*, which though leſs conſidered, is yet of more univerſal and more conſtant obligation: And that is, that *We be ſparing and temperate in the uſe even of Lawful and Innocent Enjoyments, as thoſe who expect their Portion not in the Pleaſures of this World, but in the Happineſs of the next.* This is the proper and peculiar Virtue of the Chriſtian Religion; and indeed the only true Rule of *Temperance.* To give Men a full Liberty of ſatisfying to the utmoſt all their ſenſual Appetites in all inſtances not directly forbidden, and to ſet their Hearts upon the Injoyment of all worldly Pleaſures, as far as they can poſſibly within the Limits of Innocence, is to allow Men a Liberty which Experience ſhews they cannot bear, and which will certainly ſeduce them into the Borders of ſin: On the other hand, to reſtrain Men from injoying the good things of this preſent World any further than is ſtrictly neceſſary to preſerve their Life and Health, is to lay a ſnare on the Conſciences of Men, and to tie 'em up to what God and Nature has not tied them. The only true meaſure therefore of Chriſtian *Temperance*, is, that we ſo govern our ſelves with reſpect to the Injoyments of this preſent Life, as becomes thoſe who profeſs to be *followers of Chriſt*, and *Candidates for Heaven*; who look upon *this World* only as a State of Labour and Trial, but expect their Portion and their Happineſs in *the World to come*: That is, that we ſo uſe theſe *preſent good things*, as to preſerve our ſelves always in the *Diſpoſition fitteſt for the Performance of our Duty*; to keep the *fleſh* always in Subjection to the *Spirit*; and to maintain conſtantly that *Temper of Mind*, which

which may prepare and fit us for the *Injoyment of God*, and for the *Happineſs of Heaven.*

6. The Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion is to draw off Mens Affections from things earthly and ſenſible, and to fix them on Nobler and Spiritual Objects: It gives us the moſt refined Precepts exemplified in the Life of our Saviour, for our Rule to walk by; and ſets before us, as the Reward of our Obedience, the Happineſs of that Place, where we *ſhall be like to God*, becauſe we *ſhall ſee him as he is.* The firſt thing therefore that our Saviour requires of them that will be *his* Diſciples; is *ſo* to wean themſelves from this *preſent World*, as to be always prepared for the more ſpiritual Happineſs of that which is *to come.* The firſt thing that the Chriſtian Religion teaches us; is *ſo* to look beyond this World in the main Scope of our Lives, and to have ſo ſlight an eſteem *for*, and be ſo little immerſed *in*, all earthly Injoyments; as to have our Hearts fixed always there, where we expect our Treaſure. It teaches us to look upon the good things of this preſent World, as Talents committed to our Charge; for the doing what good we can in *the preſent State*, and thereby purchaſing to our ſelves a Treaſure incorruptible *in the future.* It teaches us to *ſet our Affections* wholly *on things above* and to have *our Converſation* always *in Heaven.* It teaches us to *love God*, as the Supream and Only Good; and to make it the Buſineſs and the Pleaſure of our Life to *Advance his Glory and to promote his Religion.*

7. This is the Diſpoſition of Mind, which the Chriſtian Religion requires of all its Profeſſors. And that this Diſpoſition of Mind cannot otherwiſe be attained and preſerved, than *by* working our ſelves up to a great contempt of the World; *by* being very temperate in the enjoyment of earthly Pleaſures; and *by* withdrawing our Affections from the deſires of them; is evident. No Man who *hath this Worlds Goods*, can cheerfully and bountifully beſtow them to the *Glory of God* and to the *Good of Men*, ſo long as he retains an over-fond Affection for the *ſplendour* of the World, and cannot deny himſelf in any of its *Pleaſures.* No Man can ſet his *Affections* on things *above*, while he places his *Happineſs* in things here *below*; nor have his *Converſation* and his *Citizenſhip* in *Heaven* while his *Heart* and *Deſires* are fix'd on *Earth.* In a word no Man can love *God* as the Supreme

Supreme and only Good, and make Religion heartily the Buſineſs of his Life; while his Affections are fondly faſtened on the *Pleaſures of Earth*, and the *Gratification* of *Senſe*.

8. He that notwithſtanding his Belief of the Goſpel, does yet retain ſuch a Love for the World, as that he cannot perſuade himſelf without great regret to part with any preſent Gratification; and is ſolicitous, not to be as Religious and to do as much good as he can, but to live as ſenſually, and to enjoy as much Pleaſure, as he thinks poſſibly conſiſtent with the hopes of Happineſs; ſuch a ones divided Affections and unmortified Deſires, will certainly be too ſtrong for the Governance of his Reaſon; and his unwillingneſs to part with *the Pleaſures* of *this Life*, will be in great danger to deprive him of *the Happineſs* of the *next*. *No Servant can ſerve two Maſters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or elſe he will hold to the one and deſpiſe the other; ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, Luke 16. 13. *The carnal*, or ſenſual *Mind*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. 8. 7. And in the 1ſt Epiſtle of St *John*, ch. 2. ver. 15. *If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* The avoiding eternal Miſery, and acquiring endleſs Bliſs, is not ſo eaſie and trivial a matter, as to be the Purchaſe of a few faint Wiſhes, the Work of a Mind diſtracted, and as it were wholly taken up with other Cares: He that hath propoſed to us this glorious Reward, has yet propoſed it upon ſuch Conditions, as that we think it worth our caring for: He indiſpenſably requires, that we fix our Affections upon heavenly things; and though we may, and ought, to make uſe of the Bleſſings of this World thankfully, as Accomodations in our Journey; yet that in the whole Courſe of our Lives the general deſign of our Actions be directed to this great End. If therefore we ſuffer other things ſo to interpoſe, as to ſteal away our Hearts and Affections; we cannot poſſibly keep up this Diſpoſition. Man's Nature and Operations are finite; and what time and attention he beſtows on one thing, muſt neceſſarily be ſubſtracted from another. If then the Vanities of this World entertain and buſie us, they muſt unavoidably interrupt our attendance on the *one thing neceſſary*; and when we begin to look upon theſe *deceitful things* as our proper Happineſs, our eſteem

eſteem will in proportion decreaſe to thoſe which *really* are ſo. Hence the *Cares of the World*, the *Deceitfulneſs of Riches* and the *Pleaſures of this Life*, are ſaid to *choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful*, Matth. 13. 22. compared with *Luke* 8. 14. And St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. That *they who will be rich*, that is, they whoſe Deſires are eagerly bent upon the good things of this preſent Life, *fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in Deſtruction & Perdition.*

9. And that this over-fond Love of the preſent World, this ſolicitous Deſire after Riches and Pleaſures, is inconſiſtent with that Diſpoſition of Mind which the Chriſtian Religion requires; ſeems to be the true and principal Scope of ſeveral of our Saviour's *Parables* to demonſtrate. The Parable of the *rich Man*, Luke 16. is evidently intended to this purpoſe. He is deſcribed to have been *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen*, and to have *fared ſumptuouſly every day*; and when *in Hell he lift up his Eyes and ſaw Abraham afar off*, and *cried* to him to *have mercy upon* him, *and* to *ſend Lazarus that he* might *dip the tip of his Finger in Water and cool* his *Tongue*; the Anſwer he received was this; *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receiveds't thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* 'Tis not ſaid, that he had ſpent his Subſtance in *Rioting* and *Drunkenneſs*; 'tis not ſaid, that he had deſerved this Puniſhment for his *Cruelty* and *Uncharitableneſs*. But only that he had lived *delicately*, and fared *ſumptuouſly*; that he had alreaſy *received his good things*; (that is, that he had received a plentiful ſhare of the good things of this preſent Life, and that he had received and valued them as his Portion and his Happineſs;) and that therefore now there remained nothing for him, but to be *tormented*.

10. That the deſign of this Parable is not meerly to condemn *Rioting* and *Extravagancy*, *Drunkenneſs* aud *Exceſs*, is evident. For had *that* only been the deſign of it the rich Man would have been plainly deſcribed to have been guilty of thoſe Vices. But ſince *our Saviour* does not directly lay thoſe things to his Charge, neither muſt *we* do it. The Parable ſays, he was *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen and fared ſumptuouſly every Day*: And as his Sta-

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tion in the World might be, he may fairly be ſuppoſed to do ſo without the imputation of *Exceſs*. As God has placed Men in different Stations in the World, and accordingly made very different diſtributions of the good things of this Life amongſt them; ſo it cannot be denied but that theſe good things may be made uſe of, according to every Man's Quality and Condition. It cannot therefore be certainly collected from the rich Man's faring ſumptuouſly, that he waſted his Subſtance in *riotous living*, as the *Prodigal* is deſcribed to have done in the foregoing Chapter; for he would certainly in this Place have been directly accuſed of doing ſo, if the Parable had been levelled againſt nothing leſs then *Rioting* and *Exceſs*.

11. Again, that the Deſign of this Parable is not meerly to condemn *Uncharitableneſs* and *Cruelty*, is alſo evident. For though it repreſents the *rich Man* on the one hand *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and faring ſumptuouſly every Day*; and on the other hand, the *poor Man lying at his Gate full of ſores, and deſiring to be fed with the Crums that fell from the rich Man's Table*; yet it contains only this Deſcription of the poor Man's Condition in Oppoſition to that of the rich Man, without taking any notice at all of their Behaviour one to another. Though therefore it may juſtly be ſuppoſed, that our Saviour deſigned to hint to us, that the poor Man did not meet with that Comfort and Relief, which might reaſonably be expected in a Place where there was ſuch plenty and abundance of all things; and that this did mightily increaſe the rich Man' Condemnation; yet this is not the thing that is *now* laid to his Charge, and therefore is not the *main* Deſign of the Parable. Parables are certain familiar ways of repreſenting things to the Capacity of the Vulgar, by eaſie and continued Similitudes; and the cloſe of the Similitude always ſhows the *principal* Scope of the Parable; as is evident in moſt of our Saviour's Diſcourſes to the *Jews*. Had our Saviour therefore in this Parable chiefly deſigned to ſhew the evil of Uncharitableneſs, and the Condemnation that attends uncharitable Men, he would (when he had repreſented the rich Man crying out to *Abraham* to *have Mercy upon him*, and begging that he would ſend *Lazarus* that he might *dip the tip of his Finger in Water and cool his Tongue*,) he would here, I ſay, have introduced the Patriarch charging him with his Uncharitableneſs, as the cauſe of his being caſt into that place of torment

torment. It would have been told him, that ſince when he lived in Eaſe and Plenty, and in the abundant injoyment of all the good things of this Life, *he* had not regard to the then miſerable Eſtate of this *poor Man*; he had no reaſon to expect now, that the Scale was turned, and himſelf fallen into a ſtate of Miſery, that the *poor Man* ſhould leave that place of Happineſs which is figured to us by *Abraham*'s Boſom, to come and quench the violence of the Flame that tormented *him*. He would have been told, that 'twas but juſt, that ſince he had *ſhewed* no Mercy, none ſhould be *ſhewn* to him; and that he ſhould *receive* no Relief from the poor Man after Death, to whom he had *given* none when he was alive. But inſtead of all this, we find only that ſhort Reply; *Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things*, therefore *now thou art tormented*.

12. It remains therefore, that the reaſon for which this rich Man is repreſented as condemned to that place of torment, is becauſe he had in his life time received his Portion of good things; that is, not becauſe he had received the Bleſſings of this World, but becauſe he had received and uſed them *as his Portion and his Happineſs*. *He* had a large and plentiful Eſtate; and he ſpent it in Jollity and Splendour. He was *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen*; and he *fared ſumptuouſly every day*. He denied himſelf nothing, that tended to the Eaſe and Pleaſure of his *own Life*; or that could make him look ſplendid in the Eyes of *others*. Hereupon he *accounted himſelf a happy Man*; and *bleſſed himſelf in the multitude of his Riches*. He looked on them not as Talents committed to him by God to be employed for the *doing good in his Generation*; but as his *own* Portion, that he might live in Eaſe and Plenty, and that *his Heart might chear him in the days of his Life*. His *Treaſure* therefore was upon Earth; and his *Heart and Affections*, were there alſo. He ſet up his Reſt here; and was ſo wholly taken up with the ſplendour and gaiety of *this* World, that he had no time to think upon *another*; till he found by woful Experience that he had ſettled his Affections upon a wrong Object, and choſen thoſe things for his Portion and his Happineſs, which were not to be of equal duration with himſelf. Thus the Deſign of this *Parable* ſeems plainly to be this; to condemn a *ſoft* and

eaſie, a *delicate* and *voluptuous* Life; And to ſhow, that for thoſe who have a plentiful ſhare of Earthly Bleſſings, to make it their main Deſign to live in Eaſe and Pleaſure, in Gaiety and Splendour with them; to ſet their Hearts and Affections upon them; to eſteem them as their good things, and to place their Happineſs in them, is inconſiſtent with that temper and diſpoſition of Mind which the Chriſtian Religion requires in thoſe, who expect their portion in the Spiritual Happineſs of the World to come. And to this Senſe we muſt underſtand thoſe Sayings of our Saviour, *Luke 6. 25. Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger; wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep:* And *ver. 24. Wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your Conſolation*; that is, ye have received thoſe things which ye accounted your Portion, and wherein ye placed your Happineſs.

13. In like manner, the *Parable* of that other *rich Man*, Luke 12. whoſe *Ground brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himſelf, ſaying, What ſhall I do becauſe I have no room where to beſtow my Fruits? and he ſaid, This will I do, I will pull down my Barns and build greater, and there will I beſtow all my Fruits and my Goods: And I will ſay to my Soul, Soul, thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine eaſe, eat, drink and be merry.* This *Parable*, I ſay, ſeems alſo plainly deſigned againſt the ſame *ſoftneſs* and *voluptuouſneſs* of Life. Our Saviour does not deſcribe this Man to be *Covetous*, and that he would *ſtore up* all his Goods *to no uſe*; but that he would take the good of them himſelf, he would eat, drink and *be merry:* 'Tis the ſame word that we render elſewhere, to *fare ſumptuouſly*: But *God ſaid unto him, Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be required of thee, and then whoſe ſhall thoſe things be which thou haſt provided?* His Caſe ſeems to be the very ſame with that of the rich man, *Luke 16.* The one reſolved that in his Life time he would *eat, drink* and *be merry*; and in the midſt of his Jollity his *Soul* was *required of* him: The other was *clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day*; and when after Death he complained that he was in a place of torment, he was by *Abraham* reminded that he had *in* his *life time* received his *good things.*

14. Laſtly, the Hiſtory of the *young Man*, Mark 10. who

who *came running and kneeled to* our Saviour, *and asked him, Good Maſter, what ſhall I do that I may inherit eternal Life?* is an eminent Inſtance of the deceitfulneſs of the Love of the World. He had kept all the Commandments from his youth; and therefore one would think was well prepared, to receive our Saviour's Doctrine: Yet when he bad him, *Go thy way, ſell whatſoever thou haſt, and give to the Poor, and thou ſhalt have Treaſure in Heaven, and come take up the Croſs and follow me*; 'tis ſaid, *he was ſad at that ſaying, and went away grieved, for he had great poſſeſſions.* 'Tis not ſaid either that he was *coverous* on the one hand, or *prodigal* on the other; much leſs that he ſpent his Subſtance in *Revelling and Drunkenneſs*: But here was his Fault; his Heart was ſet upon his great Poſſeſſions, and he could not perſuade himſelf to part with them, though upon the proſpect of an extraordinary Reward. So unfit is a Mind deeply immerſed in the Love of this preſent World, for the reception of the Truth and Severity of the Goſpel; and ſo difficult for thoſe who have a large ſhare of the good things of this World, not to be thus immerſed in the Love of it.

15. For this reaſon it is that *great Riches* and *continual Proſperity in the World*, are all along through the *New Teſtament* deſcribed as a very dangerous and unſafe State. Perſecution has not a greater power to force Men *violently* from there Duty, than Riches and great Proſperity have to ſupplant them *inſenſibly*, and to entice them from it. Riches and proſperity do by degrees ſoften and debaſe Mens Minds; they do as it were tie Men down, and faſten their Affections to the things of this preſent World; they ſenſualize Mens Thoughts, and divert them from taking any pleaſure in the Contemplation of Spiritual and Divine things; in a word, they ply Men ſo conſtantly with freſh Baits and Temptations, and are ſo continually preſſing them to ſatifie their ſenſual Appetites; that without a very great Meaſure of the Grace of God, and an extraordinary degree of Temperance and Contempt of the World, Man's Mind is not able to keep it ſelf free from the Service of ſo enticing a Maſter.

16. And this I take to be the meaning of thoſe ſevere Sayings of our Saviour, *Matth.* 19. 23. *Verily I ſay unto you, that a rich Man ſhall hardly enter into the Kingdom of*

Heaven. And again I ſay unto you, It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God. At which when his Diſciples, taking his Words in too ſtrict a Senſe, were *aſtoniſhed above meaſure*; he anſwered again and ſaid unto them, *Mark* 10. 24. *Children, how hard is it for them that truſt in riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God!* He does not ſay that 'tis abſolutely *impoſſible* for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But becauſe 'tis *certain* that they who *put their truſt* in Riches, never ſhall; and becauſe 'tis *exceeding hard* for them that *have* Riches, not to *put their truſt* in them; therefore he ſays, *How hardly ſhall they that have Riches, enter into the Kingdom of God!* Riches and conſtant Proſperity are ſo great a temptation, that *with Men*, i. e. humanly ſpeaking, it is not poſſible for one who enjoys theſe things, to be a good Chriſtian; though *with God*, i. e. with the Grace of God, to which *all things are poſſible*, this Temptation may not only be overcome, but thoſe Riches which are to moſt Men an occaſion of falling, may become the matter of a more extraordinary Virtue, and the occaſion of a Man's *doing* much more good in *this World*, and *obtaining* a much greater degree of Happineſs in the *next*. Our Saviour therefore does not ſay, That a rich Man cannot *poſſible* be ſaved; or that any Man ſhall be *miſerable* in the *other World*, for no other reaſon than becauſe he has been *happy* in *this*; but only that Riches are *exceeding apt* to lull Men into that truſt *in* and love *of* the World, which is inconſiſtent with that diſpoſition of Mind and Soul, which the Chriſtian Religion requires of thoſe who expect their Portion in another Life.

17. And hence are thoſe ſo frequent and repeated Exhortations in the *New Teſtament*, to *mortifie our earthly Deſires*, and to *deny our ſelves*; *not* to *love the World, neither the things that are in the World*, 1 Joh. 2. 15. *Not* to *lay up for* our ſelves *treaſure upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal*; *but* to *lay up for* our ſelves *treaſure in Heaven*, Matth. 6. 19. To *ſet* our *affections on things above, not on things on the Earth*, Coloſſ. 3. 2. And to *take heed and beware of Covetouſneſs, for* that *a Man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*, Luke 12. 15. To *beware of Covetouſneſs*; that is, *not* of hoarding up Riches

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to no uſe (as we generally underſtand the word) *but* of ſetting our Hearts upon Riches and employing them to no other End, than living merrily and ſplendidly in the World; as is moſt evident from the *Parable* of the *rich Man whoſe Ground brought forth plentifully*, following immediately in the next words.

18. 'Tis therefore a neceſſary Duty in thoſe who believe the Goſpel of Chriſt and profeſs themſelves his Diſciples, if God calls them not to ſuffer and to part with all for his ſake, yet at leaſt to *wean themſelves from the love of this preſent World*, and to *get above the Deſires* of it. They muſt be careful to uſe the good things of this Life ſo, as not to *corrupt and ſoften*, to *ſenſualize and debaſe* their Minds, and to *clog and unfit them for the Contemplation of Spiritual and Divine things*: They muſt remember, that they receive *this Worlds Goods*, not that they may live in *eaſe and ſoftneſs*, in *delicacy and voluptuouſneſs* with them, but that they may thankfully employ them to the *Glory of God* and to the *Good of Men*: In a word, they muſt always be careful ſo to behave themſelves with reſpect to all earthly Enjoyments, as may become thoſe, who look upon *the preſent Life* as a ſtate of *Labour and Trial*, but expect their *Happineſs* and their *Reward* in *the future*. This is (as I have ſaid) the true Meaſure of Chriſtian Temperance; and this Temper of Mind, every one who will be the Diſciple of *Chriſt*, muſt reſolve to attain.

19 If this ſeem hard to any one, let him conſider, that as a Mind ſenſualized and wedded to earthly things, is *here* utterly unfit for a *ſpiritual and heavenly Life*; ſo it muſt alſo *hereafter* be as utterly incapable of the *heavenly Glory*. If a Man places his Happineſs in the *Contemplation of God* and the *Exerciſe of Virtue* here, he ſhall continue to enjoy it alſo hereafter; becauſe *God* and *Virtue* continue for ever: But if he places his Happineſs in the Pleaſures of this World, and in the Enjoyments of Senſe; when theſe things are at an end, his Happineſs muſt be at a end alſo. Mens Minds are by degrees tinctured, and transformed into the Nature of the things they are fixed upon; and in ſuch things as they delight to dwell upon, in ſuch things muſt be their Portion. Hence *Tully*, and after him ſome *Chriſtian* Writers have thought, that the Souls of wordly-minded Men ſhall carry with them into the other State ſuch ſtrong Affections and Deſires after the things they de-

lighted in here, that were a ſenſual Perſon to be admitted even into the *Seat of the Bleſſed*, yet ſhould he find nothing there that could make him happy.

20. But however this be (which I ſhall not now nicely diſpute) certain it is, that nothing is more *reaſonable*, than that thoſe who place their Happineſs in the Enjoyments of *this* Life, ſhould come ſhort of the Glories of the *next*. We all know how ſhort and tranſitory the preſent Life is, and the Scripture every where tells us, that we are Strangers and Sojourners in the World; we are now only in a ſtate of Trial, and travelling as it were through a ſtrange Country to our proper Home: *Whilſt we are at home in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord*, 2 Cor. 5. 6. And *here we have no continuing City, but we ſeek one to come*, Heb. 13. 14. Now therefore if Men will ſtop in the midſt of their Journey, and make their Inn their Home; If they will place their Happineſs in thoſe things, which God has given them only as Conveniences for their preſent ſtate; what can be more reaſonable, than that God ſhould aſſign them their Portion in thoſe things? Man's Soul is Spiritual and Immortal, and by the Nobleneſs of its Nature exalted above the Vanities of this preſent Life; and though by being immerſed in Body it be neceſſitated to converſe with Senſible and Corporeal things, yet does it thirſt after more pure and refined Objects; it can look beyond this World to its Native Country, and knows that its proper Happineſs is by imitating the Life of God, to be made partaker of his Glory: Now if Men notwithſtanding all this, will take up with ſenſual and earthly Enjoyments; if they *will* clog the flight of the Soul, and ſtake it down to theſe ignoble Objects; if they *will* ſet their Hearts and Affections on theſe things, which God has given them as matter for the exerciſe of their Virtue; what can be more Juſt than that God ſhould ſuffer them to ſatiate themſelves with their beloved Pleaſures, and deny them thoſe Noble ones which they ſo little eſteemed? 'Tis certain the Bleſſings of this World are Talents committed to our Charge, which God expects we ſhould lay out to his Glory and the benefit of the World; and to whom he has committed many of them, of him he will require the more: He expects we ſhould

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do what good we can with them; which is called in Scripture, *giving out* our Money *to the Exchangers, that when* our Lord *cometh*, he *may receive* his *own* with Uſury: Now if inſtead of this, we enjoy theſe things wholly our ſelves, and employ them only to the ſerving our own worldly Deſigns; what can be more reaſonable, than that God ſhould ſuffer them to be our Portion and Reward? The *Phariſees* in our Saviour's time were notoriouſly covetous and worldly minded, doing even their Acts of Charity meerly for the praiſe of Men; and our Saviour repeats it no leſs than thrice in the *Sixth* of St. *Matthew*, that they *had their Reward*: The rich *Jews* alſo made generally no other Uſe of their Riches, than to live in Eaſe and Pleaſure, in Gaiety and Splendor; and our Saviour tells them, that *they had received their Conſolation*.

21. The Happineſs of Heaven is a great and Glorious Reward; and *they who will be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Reſurrection from the Dead*, Luk. 20.35. muſt be content not to live a ſoft and eaſie, a ſenſual and voluptuous Life; but to *labour diligently*, and to *work out* their *own Salvation with fear and trembling*. Our Saviour compares the Kingdom of Heaven to *a Pearl of great price*, which when a *Merchant-man found, he ſold all that he had and bought it*, Mat. 13.46. and whoever hath worthy Notions of the *things that God hath prepared for them that love him*, can never think any thing hard, to purchaſe ſo great a Treaſure. St. *Paul* compares the Reward of Virtue to a Crown, for which *they who run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize*: And if *they* who *ſtrive for the Maſtery, to obtain a corruptible Crown*, are *temperate in all things*, 1 Cor. 9. 24. that is, are careful to prepare their Bodies beforehand for the Race; that they may *run, not uncertainly*, but ſo *that* they *may obtain*; how much more ought *we* to *bring* the Body *into ſubjection*, and by Temperance prepare it for the Chriſtian Warfare, who are to ſtrive for an *incorruptible* and never-fading Crown?

22. The Hiſtory of *our Saviour* is an Example as of a Life not moroſe and retired from the World, ſo of a Life very far from being ſenſual and voluptuous: *He* utterly deſpiſed all the Grandeur and Pleaſures of the world, and willingly endured the ſcorn and contempt of obſtinate and malicious Men, that he might eſtabliſh the

Worſhip and true Religion of God; *He went about doing good*, Act. 10.38. making *that* the whole buſineſs of his life, and cheerfully ſubmitting to undergo any hardſhip, that he might inſtruct the Ignorant or relieve the Diſtreſſed: And if *we* hope *at laſt* to be made *partakers of his Glory*, we muſt reſolve *now* in ſome meaſure to *imitate his Life*, who has *left us an Example that we ſhould follow his ſteps*, Pet. 2.21. The Lives of all the Saints of God, who have gone before us, are eminent Examples, not of Eaſe and Softneſs, but either of great Sufferings for the Cauſe of Religion, or of great Zeal and Pains in it: The Patriarchs who lived before our Saviour, and *ſaw the Promiſes*, only *afar off*, confeſſed that *they were Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth*, and that their Hopes were fixed upon a *better Country*, that is, *an Heavenly*; and all the Primitive Chriſtians, who firſt followed our Saviour, and ſaw the Promiſes fulfilled, did either through Perſecutions become *Naked, Deſtitute, and Afflicted*, or by their boundleſs Charity and Contempt of the World, did almoſt make themſelves ſo: And if we hope to have our Portion among theſe Servants of the moſt High, in that *general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born*, in that *heavenly Jeruſalem, the City of the living God*, Heb. 12.23. we muſt in ſome proportion conform our ſelves to the imitation of *their* Zeal, *their* Labour and *their* Patience; and not be wholly carried away with the coldneſs and indifferency of a careleſs and corrupted Age. *They* generally parted with *all things* for the ſake of Chriſt; and certainly *we* are at leaſt bound, not to faſten our Affections ſo ſtrongly upon the things of this World, as hardly to be able to deny our ſelves *any thing*. *Their* Temperance, their Abſtinence, and their Contempt of the World, was almoſt incredible and exceſſive; and aſſuredly *we* cannot with the ſame Hopes ſpend our whole Lives, in nothing but Softneſs, Gallantry and Pleaſure. In fine, *Their* Charity was wonderful and boundleſs, extending it ſelf even to ſuch Inſtances as we can hardly think credible; and can *we* imagine, that *we* are not obliged to do at leaſt *ſomething*, and to take *ſome* Pains, for the *Glory of God* and for the *Good of Men*?

23. Laſtly, if theſe things ſeem hard, and tend to intrench too much upon the Pleaſures of Life; conſider the

the concluſion and final upſhot of things: Conſider what Opinion we ſhall have of things at the concluſion of our Lives, when *Death and Judgment* approach; and let us view things *now* in the ſame Light, as we know certainly we ſhall be forced to do *then*. We know we ſhall *then* lament the loſs of every opportunity of doing good, which we have omitted; and ſhall grutch every minute of Folly and Vanity, which might have been employ'd to the increaſe of the Portion of our future Happineſs: We know we ſhall *then* look upon all the paſt pleaſures of Life, as emptineſs and nothing; and be convinced that there is no Pleaſure but in true Virtue, and no Fruit in any thing but in having done much Good: And if we do indeed know this, what can be more miſerably and more inexcuſably fooliſh, than not to make the ſame Judgment of things *now*, as we know aſſuredly we ſhall do afterwards? The reaſon why Men die full of *Fears* and *Uncertainties*, full of *dark Suſpitions* and *confuſed Doubts*, is becauſe they are conſcious to themſelves that they have lived *careleſly* and *indifferently*; without having taken any Pains either for the *Service of God*, or for the *Good of Men*; and without having uſed any Zealous Endeavours, to *overcome the preſent World* or to *obtain the future*: But if Men would conſider things in time; if they would paſs true Judgments of things, and act accordingly with Reſolution and Conſtancy; they might then know certainly their own State, and might *Live with Comfort* and *die with Aſſurance*.

CHAP. XII.

Of our Obligation to be particularly careful to avoid thoſe Sins, to which we are moſt in danger to be tempted.

1. FIfthly, *Be particularly careful to reſiſt and avoid thoſe Sins, to which either your Conſtitution, Company, or Employment, make you moſt in danger to be tempted.* This is the great Trial of every Man's *Sincerity*, and of his *Growth in Virtue*. He that for the Love of God and the Hopes of Heaven can mortifie and deny his moſt darling Luſts, can quell and keep under his moſt natural Paſſions, can reſiſt and conſtantly overcome thoſe Temp-

tations by which he is moſt in danger to be ſeduced into Sin; ſuch a one has an infallible Aſſurance of his own Sincerity, and is very near to the Perfection of Virtue.

But if there be any one Inſtance, wherein a Man habitually falls ſhort of his Duty, or indulges a Luſt, a Paſſion, a ſinful Deſire; 'tis certain, whatever other Virtues he may be indued with, that he either acts upon wrong Principles, and is not ſincere; or that his Reſolutions are hitherto too week and ineffectual, to intitle him to the *Comfort of Religion* here, or to the *Aſſurance of Happineſs* hereafter.

2. There is no Man whom either the *Conſtitution of his Body* or the *Temper of his Mind*, the *Nature of his Employment* or the *Humour of his Company*, does not make obnoxious to ſome particular ſort of Temptations more than to any other: And in this thing it is, that thoſe who have ſomething of Sincerity, and will not with others *Run into all exceſs of Riot*, do yet make ſhift to deceive and impoſe upon themſelves. They think they are indued with many good and virtuous Qualities; they hate Profaneneſs and profeſſed enormous Impiety; they know themſelves innocent of many great Sins, which they ſee others continually commit: But ſomething, to which they are particularly tempted, they indulge themſelves in; and the fatal Miſchief is, that thoſe Sins which they ſee others commit, and to which themſelves are not violently tempted, ſeem moſt abſurd and unreaſonable, and eaſie to be avoided; but that to which they are themſelves addicted, they think to be either ſo ſmall as not to be of any very evil Conſequence, or ſo difficult to be reſiſted as to be allowed for among the unavoidable Infirmities of Nature. Thus to many who have little or no Dealings in the World, the Sins of *Fraud*, *Injuſtice*, *Deceit*, *Over-reaching*, and the like, ſeem very heinous, baſe and unreaſonable; while at the ſame time they allow themſelves in habitual *Intemperances* and *Impurities*, as either harmleſs Vices or almoſt inſuperable Weakneſſes. On the other hand there is no leſs a Number of thoſe, who applaud themſelves in their own Minds, that they are not as other Men, *Intemperate*, *Debauched*, *Drunkards*, *Revellers*, and the like; while at the ſame time they look upon *Fraud* and *Deceit*, *Tricking*, and

and *Over-reaching*, as the Neceſſary Art and Myſtery of Buſineſs.

3. But this is a very great and a very fatal Cheat. No Man can have any true and ſolid Peace *in himſelf*; no Man can have any juſt Confidence in his Addreſſes *to God*; no Man can have any Title to the Promiſes and Comforts of Religion *here*; much leſs to the Glory and Reward of it *hereafter*; before his Obedience be, if not *Perfect*, yet at leaſt *Univerſal*. God will not ſhare with any Impiety; nor ever accept of any Man's Obedience, ſo long as 'tis mixed with *the accurſed thing*. If there be any Sin, that we can *hardly* part with; if there be any Luſt, that is like a *Right Hand* or a *Right Eye*; this is the thing that God hath propoſed to us to Conquer; *this* is the *good Fight* which we muſt fight through *Faith*; *this* is the Victory to which Heaven is propoſed. For *this* we muſt gather together all the Forces of Reaſon and Religion; for *this* we muſt ſtrengthen our ſelves by Prayer and Conſideration: In *this* Warfare we muſt *reſolve ſtrongly, perſevere obſtinately*, and though we be conquered, yet *reſolve to overcome*; always remembring, that *this* is the Stake for *Life* or *Death*, *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, *Heaven* or *Hell*.

4. Here therefore let every Man conſider with himſelf; and let him well obſerve his *own* Temptations, and his *own* Strength. Let him conſider, *not* how many Sins he can eaſily avoid, but by what Temptations he may moſt eaſily be ſeduced; and let him make it his Buſineſs to guard himſelf *there*. Let thoſe who are *young*, and not yet entred into the hurry and buſineſs of the World, not value themſelves upon their being innocent from the Sins of *Fraud* and *Injuſtice*, of *Covetouſneſs* and *Extortion*, or the like; (for that perhaps they may be, without any Pains, and without overcoming any powerful Temptation;) but let them try themſelves, whether they be firm againſt the Temptations of *Vanity* and *Lightneſs*, of *Heat* and *Paſſion*, of *Intemperance* and *Impurity*; and let them judge of themſelves by their behaviour in *theſe* Inſtances, wherein they are moſt obnoxious: Let them conſider, that *their peculiar* Task, *is to overcome the wicked one*, 1 John 2. 13. *to* ſubdue the Fleſh to the Spirit; to conquer and get above thoſe Pleaſures, which *ſenſualize the Soul*,

Soul, and inſlave the Mind to the Body, and thereby bring it under the Power of Death and Deſtruction: And in fine, to ſtrive continually to cleanſe themſelves from all Impurity, not only of Body, but even of Mind and Spirit, *perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God*: Let them conſider, that they are by Baptiſm dedicated to the Service of God; that they are by Confirmation aſſured of the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; and that their Bodies are the *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt*; which if they keep *here* in *Temperance* and *Purity*, in *Sanctification* and Honour, they ſhall *hereafter* appear with them in *Glory*; but if they *abuſe* them by any *Intemperance*, or *defile* them with any *Luſt*, they drive away the Spirit *whereby they are ſealed unto the Day of Redemption*, and ſhall forfeit their Life. Again on the other hand, Thoſe whoſe *Age*, or *Temper*, or *Company*, or *Buſineſs*, places them beyond the Follies and Extravagancies of Youth, and out of the way of thoſe Temptations with which others are hurried away continually, muſt not eſteem of themſelves by their not running into *thoſe* exceſſes of Riot, to which perhaps they have little or no Temptation; but muſt examine whether they be exactly *Juſt* in the Buſineſs they are employ'd in, whether they be truly *Uſeful* and *Charitable* according to their Ability, and whether they be ſincerely Careful to reſiſt thoſe Temptations, to which their particular Circumſtances, whatever they be, do more eſpecially expoſe them. This is the true Trial of every Man's Sincerity, and the moſt certain Rule by which every one may judge of his own State.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Growth, in Grace, and of Perfection.

1. LAſtly, *Strive continually to grow in Grace, and preſs forward toward Perfection.* So long as we continue in theſe Houſes of Clay, encompaſſed perpetually with the *Infirmities* of the *Fleſh*, the *Allurements* of the *World*, and the *Temptation* of the *Devil*; *we* ſhall *all offend* indeed *in many things*, and can never arrive at the Perfection of Virtue. Yet unleſs we ſtrive and preſs forwards towards *Perfection*, we ſhall never make any tolereble *progreſs.*

greſs. He that has no more *Zeal* for *Religion*, than to deſire juſt to keep within the Borders of Virtue, and to eſcape the Puniſhment of Vice, will in all probability be deceived in his Expectations, and find when it is too late, that thoſe who are *lukewarm*, and *neither cold nor hot*, are but *wretched*, *and miſerable*, *and poor*, *and blind*, *and naked*, Rev. 3. 17. and ſhall have no Portion among them that are *arraied in fine Linnen*, which is *the Righteouſneſs* and the good Works *of the Saints*. He whoſe Heart is inflamed with *an ardent Love of God*, and a *truly zealous deſire of the Happineſs of Heaven*, will with St. *Paul* never think he has *already attained*, or is *already perfect* enough; but *forgetting thoſe things which are behind and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before*, Phil. 3. 13. will always *preſs* forward *towards the Mark*, *for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*: He will never think himſelf good and holy enough; but getting continually a more compleat Victory over his Frailties and Infirmities, will *go from ſtrength to ſtrength*, Pſal. 84. 7. in the Improvements of Virtue *here*, till he *appear before God* in the Perfection of Holineſs and of Glory *hereafter*.

2. Think not when you have once attained a *clear knowledge* of your Duty, and framed *hearty Reſolutions* to perform it, and *begun to live* according to that Knowledge and thoſe Reſolutions; that you are preſently in a *perfect and confirmed* State of Virtue. You muſt frequently *review and meditate upon* the Particulars of your *Duty*: You muſt frequently *renew and ſtrengthen* your good *Reſolutions*: and you muſt always be *correcting and amending* your *Practice*: Till that which was *well reſolved* upon, and *bravely begun*, arrive by the degrees of a diligent and perpetual Improvement, to a *confirmed Habit* and *ſettled Temper* of Mind.

3. Think not when you have performed your Duty according to the common Meaſures of Obedience, and the vulgarly reputed Bounds of the Obligation of the Chriſtian Laws; and when you are by others looked upon, as a good and juſt and holy Perſon; that you are now arrived at the Perfection of Virtue. For the *Judgment of God* is very different from the *Opinion of Men*; and ſuch a Life as is now look'd upon as very good and creditable, would in the Times of the Apoſtles or Primitive Chriſtians

ans have been thought, if not *ſcandalous*, yet at beſt *very cold* and *indifferent*. He that will be perfect, muſt be *above* all *Laws*, and *Cuſtoms*, and *Opinions*; and muſt not limit his *Purity of Mind*, his *Contempt of the World*, and his *Deſire of doing good*, to any Degrees or Rules; but muſt exalt them in proportion to his *love of God*, and his *hopes of Happineſs*.

4. Further, Think not when upon a *looſe* and *general* view of your Life your Conſcience does not accuſe you of any *ſcandalous* and *deliberate* Sins, that therefore you have attained to the higheſt pitch of Virtue. There are many Sins, with which Men eaſily impoſe upon their own Minds; *much* indifferency in Religion, and coldneſs of Devotion; *many* omiſſions of Duties, and neglects of opportunities of doing Good; *many* faults of ſurprize, and indecencies of Paſſion; *much* ſenſuality, and over-fond Love of the things of this preſent World; *many* exceſſes, and ſmall degrees of Intemperance; which are not to be diſcovered and overcome, without entring into a more *ſtrict*, *particular*, and *impartial* examination of our Actions; and making *repeated Reſolutions*, and uſing *conſtant unwearied Endeavours* to correct whatever upon ſuch ſtrict ſearch ſhall appear to be amiſs.

5. Many there have been, (and ſome even among the Heathens themſelves,) who have *every Night* ſtrictly examined into the Actions of the *paſt Day*; that if they had done any thing for which they could reprove themſelves, they might reſolve to be more careful in that Particular for the future; and if they found they had in all Points performed their Duty, they might confirm and incourage themſelves to continue to perform it. Others have done this yet more frequently, and habitually; never *going about* any thing, without a ſhort Thought how they might beſt act, for the Honour of God, for the Good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of their own Mind; and never *having done* any thing, without a ſhort Reflection whether they had acted ſo, as was moſt agreeable to theſe great Ends.

6. Theſe indeed are things not to be impoſed upon any Man by any particular Rules, but ſuch as muſt be wholly left to the Diſcretion of every Man, to be uſed according to each ones *Prudence* or *Zeal*. Only in general

neral 'tis certain, That by how much the *more frequently* a Man examines the Actions of his Life, and by how much the *more ſtrictly* he obſerves his ſmaller Failures, and by how much the *more particularly* he reſolves and endeavours to correct them; by ſo much the more will his *Religion* be *Uniform*, and his *Obedience Perfect*. He that uſes himſelf often to conſider, and to recollect the Particulars of his Duty, will perform many things, which other *know* indeed and *underſtand* in general, but through habitual careleſs and inconſiderateneſs *omit*: And he that often ſearches ſtrictly into the ſmalleſt Errors of his Life, and prays againſt them, and reſolves particularly and endeavours to amend them; will be able to avoid and overcome many of thoſe things, which are by others looked upon as the unavoidable Frailties and Infirmities of Nature.

7. And in proportion as a Man arrives nearer to this perfect State of Virtue, ſo will that *Peace of Conſcience*, which is the peculiar Reward of Religion in this World, grow up by degrees to a *ſettled Joy and Aſſurance of Mind*. One whoſe Life is void of great and ſcandalous Crimes, but otherwiſe not ſtrict and diligent, will be free indeed from the Terrour and Amazement of the Wicked; but becauſe he has taken no great Pains, nor done any thing conſiderable for the Love of God and for the ſake of Religion, his Mind will yet be diſturbed with many ſcrupulous *Doubts* and uncertain *Fears*: But when a Man has been truly diligent to improve himſelf to the utmoſt, and has with *Zeal* and *Earneſtneſs* preſſed forward towards Perfection; then is it that he attains to that Tranquility and Aſſurance, which wiſe Men have compared to a *continual Feaſt*. The Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, which ſome have found upon the careful and ſtrict examination of *one* paſt Days Actions, has been very great: But that compleat Aſſurance, which ariſes from the Conſcience of a conſiderable part of a Man's Life have having been ſpent in the Strictneſs and in the Purity of the Goſpel, is a Pleaſure infinitely ſurpaſſing all the Enjoyments of Senſe; being indeed a fore-taſte of the Happineſs of Heaven, and a Rejoycing before hand in Chriſt *with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory*. 1 Pet. 1. 8. Such a one as has arrived to *this* pitch, *lives* in *Peace* and

and *dies* with *Aſſurance*, and at the appearance of our Lord ſhall be *preſented faultleſs before the Preſence of his Glory with exceeding Joy.* Jude. 24.

Eſſay the Third.

Of REPENTANCE.

CHAP. I.

Of Repentance in General.

1. THE plain and expreſs Condition upon which the Goſpel promiſes Salvatior to all Men, is *Obedience* or a *Holy Life*. The *Time* from which this Holy Life is to begin, is either *Baptiſm* or *Confirmation*; that is, *the Time when* thoſe who are either at riper Years converted to the Chriſtian Religion, or have from their Infancy been brought up in the Profeſſion of it, *come to a clear and diſtinct knowledge of their Duty.* That from *this Period* every Man is obliged to perſevere in a conſtant Courſe of Holineſs, that is, in a *continual and ſincere*, though *weak and imperfect* Obedience to all the Commands of God, the Goſpel plainly declares to us: And that the glorious Rewards of Heaven ſhould be *at all* promiſed to ſo ſmall a Service, as the imperfect Obedience which weak, ſinful degenerate Man ſhould be able to perform; is the purchaſe of the Price of the Blood of the Son of God, and the Effect of the infinite Riches of the Divine Mercy made known to us by Chriſt. Had God therefore to thoſe who had once been received to the Mercy of the Goſpel, and had once been *made partakers of the heavenly Gift*, Heb. 6.6. and had *taſted the good Word of God and the Powers of the* World to come, allowed no more Remiſſion for *wilful and preſumptuous Sins*; but accepted thoſe only, who having once *waſhed their Garments in the Blood of the Lamb*, Rev. 1. 5, 7, 14. ſhould from thenceforward keep themſelves in a Goſpel Senſe pure and undefiled: yet had his Mercy been infinitely greater, than ſinful Man could have deſerved or expected. But ſuch is the earneſtneſs of God's Deſire to make his

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Creatures Happy, and ſuch the Abundance of the Grace made known by the Goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; that even to thoſe who having been already admitted to the Mercy and Favour of the Goſpel, and having received the Promiſe of a great and glorious Reward upon the Condition of an eaſie and moſt reaſonable Obedience, and having been endued with the Earneſt of his Holy Spirit, ſhall notwithſtanding relapſe *after all this* into wilful and deliberate Sins; even to theſe, I ſay, he has yet further granted, that if by a ſolemn Repentance they ſhall again unfeignedly renew their Obedience, and from *that Period* perſevere in well-doing to the end, they ſhall yet attain to the Reward of the Faithful; and ſhall be ſaved as *Fire-brands plucked out of the Fire*, or as Men eſcaping upon a *Plank after Shipwreck*.

2. By *Repentance* therefore I would all along in this *Eſſay* be underſtood to mean, not *that* Repentance which is the conſtant Duty of all Chriſtians; (who are indeed continually bound to repent in general of all thoſe Slips and Infirmities, thoſe Defects and Surprizes, which by the Condition of the Goſpel Covenant are moſt readily pardon'd:) For this Repentance is not properly a new Period or Beginning of a Holy Life; but a neceſſary and continued part of that imperfect Obedience which Man in this degenerate State is capable of performing, and which God has in his Goſpel declared that he will always accept inſtead of perfect Innocence: But by *Repentane* I here underſtand *that Repentance*, which is an intire change of Heart & Mind, a *turning from Darkneſs to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God*; whereby thoſe who by *wilful and deadly* Sins have *left their firſt Eſtate*, and forfeited their Title to the Crown of Righteouſneſs, are to begin anew their Obedience, in order to recover the Mercy and Favour of God: And that no one may be perplexed with vain Scruples, and unreaſonable Fears; this Repentance is ſuch as plainly no Man is obliged to, but thoſe who are guilty of *great and deliberate Sins*; of *Blaſphemy*, *Perjury*, *open Profaneneſs*, or *contempt of Religion*; of *Murder*, *Sedition*, *Theft*, *manifeſt and deſigned Injuſtice*, *Hatred*, *Fraud*, *Wrong*, or *Oppreſſion*; of *Adulteries*, *Fornications*, *Uncleanneſſes*, or *habitual Drunkenneſs* and *Intemperance*; or of ſome other Sins either *maliciouſly wilful*, or *notoriouſly habitual*.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

That God allows Repentance even to the greateſt of Sinners.

1. IN the Primitive Church there was a Sect of Men, who upon a miſtaken Intepretation of ſome Paſſages of the *Epiſtle* of St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, contended that there was no more place of Repentance allowed to thoſe who after Baptiſm ſhould fall into any of theſe *wilful and deliberate Sins*: They taught that in Baptiſm indeed all manner of Sin and Blaſphemy whatſoever, was forgiven Men abſolutely, and waſh'd away by the Blood of Chriſt; but that if after that great Remiſſion they ſinned again *wilfully and preſumptuouſly*, they could no more obtain any further Pardon than the Death of Chriſt, that great Sacrifice for Sin, could be repeated; and that therefore however they ſhould ſincerely repent, yet there now remained nothing more for them, but a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignatio, which ſhould devour the Adverſary*, Heb. 10. 27. But that this was a great miſtake; and that God *does* admit even the greateſt of Sinners, upon their true Repentance, to Forgiveneſs and Pardon, is evident both from the *Nature of God*, and the *Deſign of Chriſtianity*, from the *Practice of the Apoſtles*, and from the *general Senſe of the Primitive Church.*

2. God is a Being, as of infinite *Purity and Holineſs*, ſo alſo of infinite *Goodneſs and Mercy*; and as he cannot poſſibly be reconciled to Men, ſo long as they continue wicked; ſo when ever they ceaſe to be ſo, and return again to the *Obedience of Gods Commands*, and to the *imitation of his Nature*, we cannot ſuppoſe but that he will again admit them to his Pardon and Favour. Goodneſs and Mercy are our moſt *natural* Notions of God; and the Diſcoveries which he hath made of himſelf by *Revelation*, are moſt exactly agreeable thereto. At the paſſing by of his Glory before *Moſes*, he proclaimed himſelf, *The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long ſuffering and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, forgiving Iniquities, Tranſgreſſions and Sins*, Exod. 34. 6. By the *Prophets* he declares and ſwears by himſelf, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*, Ezek. 33. 11. And above

above all, by that ſtupendous Inſtance of Mercy, the *ſending his only Son* out of his Boſom to give himſelf *a Sacrifice* for the Sins of Men, he has diſcovered ſuch an earneſt deſire of our Reconciliation and Salvation, as will be the everlaſting ſubject of the *Praiſes of Men* and the *Admiration of Angels*. If therefore God, when he had made a Covenant of perfect Obedience, and had not promiſed Pardon at all, to great and preſumptuous Sins, *did* yet *give* Pardon, and *declare* alſo to the *Jews* by his Prophets that he *would* do ſo: and if, when Men were *yet Enemies* to him, he was ſo *willing* that not *any one ſhould periſh, but all ſhould come to Repentance*, 2 Pet. 3. 9. yea ſo *deſirous to have all Men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth*; that he not only *ſpared not his own Son*, 1 Tim. 2. 4. to *deliver him up for us all*, but tells us even of *Joy in Heaven* at a Sinners accepting the gracious Terms of the Goſpel, and repreſents himſelf as a tender *Father* running to meet his returning *Prodigal*, and falling upon his Neck and kiſſing him; If this, I ſay, was the Compaſſion which God ſhewed to Man, in his firſt ſinful and miſerable State; 'tis *very reaſonable* to conclude and hope, that his Mercy is not ſo entirely exhauſted at once, but that the ſame Pity may be yet further extended even to thoſe alſo, who *after the knowledge of the Truth* having been ſeduced by the Temptations of the World and the Devil, to depart from God and to forſake their Duty, ſhall again return unto him with Sincerity and Perſeverance.

3. The Deſign of the Goſpel, is to *teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, Tit. 2. 12. And certainly whenſoever it comes to have this effect upon a man, it gives him a Title to the *bleſſed Hope*, and a well-grounded Aſſurance of Mercy at *the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*. The Foundation of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, upon which the whole ſum of Affairs is now eſtabliſhed, is *Faith* and *Repentance*; and whenſoever a Man ſo truly repents, as to purifie himſelf effectually from every evil Work, and *by the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the Body*, he *ſhall* certainly *live*, Rom. 8. 13. Our Saviour himſelf gives expreſs Directions, when a Man's Chriſtian Brother treſpaſſes againſt him, to uſe all poſſible means to reclaim him, both by private and publick Reproof, before he rejects him utterly

terly as a *Heathen Man and a Publican*: He commands us, though our *Brother* ſins never ſo often againſt us, yet if he turns again and repents, to forgive him; and has promiſed upon this Condition, that *we* alſo ſhall in like manner find forgiveneſs at the Hands of God: And in the Epiſtle ſent by the Apoſtle St. *John* to the Biſhops of the Seven Churches of *Aſia*, he exhorts them earneſtly to *remember from whence* they were *fallen*, and to *repent, and be zealous, and do* their *firſt works*, Rev. 2. 5. and promiſes, that if upon this Invitation any Man would *hear* his *Voice*, and *open the Door*; that is, would be moved by theſe Exhortations to repent and amend, he would *come in to him and ſup with him*; Rev. 3. 20. that is, would again receive him to his Mercy and Favour.

4. Accordingly the *Writings of the Apoſtles*, though directed to Chriſtians, are yet full of earneſt Exhortations to Repentance; and their *Hiſtory* contains many inſtances of thoſe who after great falls were thereby reſtored to their firſt ſtate. St. *Peter* exhorts *Simon Magus*, who thought *the Gift of God could be bought with Money*, to *repent of this his wickedneſs*, and gives him encouragement to hope, that he ſhould thereupon obtain forgiveneſs, *Acts* 8. 22. St. *John* tells us, That *if any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins*, 1 John 2. 2. St. *James* tells us, That if any one err from the Truth, and one convert him; he that converteth the Sinner from the Error of his way, ſhall *ſave a Soul from Death*, and *ſhall hide a multitude of Sins*, Jam. 5. 20. St. *Jude* adviſes us to *have compaſſion of ſome, making a difference*; and to *ſave others with fear, pulling them out of the fire*, ver. 23. St. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy*, to *inſtruct in meekneſs thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth; and that they may recover themſelves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his will*, 2 Tim. 2. 25. He adviſes the *Galatians*, that *if any Man be overtaken in a fault*, they *which are ſpiritual ſhould reſtore ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering* themſelves, *leſt* they *alſo be tempted*, Gal. 6. 1. He threatens the *Corinthians* to excommunicate thoſe who had *ſinned*, and had *not repented of their uncleanneſs and fornication, and laſciviouſneſs, which* they had *committed*,

mitted, 2 Cor. 12.21. And even the *Inceſtuous* Perſon, who had been guilty of ſuch a Sin as was *not ſo much as named among the Heathens* themſelves, he delivers indeed to *Satan for the deſtruction of the Fleſh*, but it was *that the Spirit might be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*, 1 Cor. 5. 5. For when *the puniſhment which was inflicted of many*, had been *ſufficient* to reduce him to Repentance, he writes to the Church to *forgive him and confort him, leſt perhaps ſuch a one ſhould be ſwallowed up with overmuch ſorrow*, 2 Cor. 2. 7.

5. And this, excepting as I have ſaid one Sect of Men, was the conſtant Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Church. To thoſe who were yet Innocent, they thought indeed no Promiſes too great, and no Threatnings too ſevere, whereby they might make them infinitely careful to preſerve their Innocence: But thoſe who had already ſinned, they incouraged to repent; and upon their Repentance admitted them again to the Peace of the *Church*, and to the Aſſurance of pardon. They taught, that *the Holy Word and Church of God, always admitted of true Repentance*: That *he that had fallen, might yet recover and eſcape, if he repented truly of what was paſt, and for the future amended his Life, and made ſatisfaction to God*: That *God not only gave full Remiſſion of Sins in Baptiſm, but allowed alſo to thoſe, who ſhould afterward ſin, a further place of Repentance*: That *to every one who heartily and ſincerely repents, God readily ſets open a Door of Pardon, and the Holy Spirit returns again into a Mind purified from the pollutions of Sin*: That *all Men who repent, even thoſe who by reaſon of their great Sins did not deſerve to have found any more Pardon, ſhall be ſaved; becauſe God out of his great Compaſſion will be patient towards Men, and keep the Invitation which he hath made by his Son*: That *God will judge every Man in the Condition he finds him; and that therefore, as it will nothing avail a Man to have been formerly Righteous, if he at laſt grows wicked; ſo one who has formerly lived wickedly, may afterwards by Repentance and renewed Obedience blot out his paſt Tranſgreſſions, and attain to the Crown of Virtue and Immortality.*

6. Thus that God admits even the greateſt of Sinners to Repentance, is evident both from *the Nature of God* and the *Deſign of the Goſpel*, from the *Practice of the Apo-*

Apoſtles and from *the conſtant Doctrine of the Primitive Church.* But then to make this Repentance ſuch, as will be acceptable to God and effectually available to obtain Pardon, there are ſeveral conſiderable Circumſtances required: And theſe I think may be reduced to theſe Three; *Firſt*, That it muſt be *Early*; *Secondly*, That it muſt be *Great*; and *Thirdly*, That it muſt be *conſtant and perſevering in its Effects.*

CHAP. III.

That true Repentance muſt be Early.

1. *Firſt*, That Repentance may be true and available to obtain pardon, it is neceſſary that it be *Early*; that is, The Sinner muſt forſake his Vices ſo timely, as to obtain the Habits of the contrary Virtues, and to live in them: Otherwiſe he can have no ſecurity *that his Repentance is hearty*; or if it be, *that it will be accepted by God.*

2. Firſt, We can never have any ſecurity that a late Repentance is *hearty and ſincere.* A Man may very well, at the amazing approach of Death and Judgment, be extreamly ſorry that he has lived wickedly; he may ſtrongly wiſh that he *had* lived the Life of the Righteous, and reſolve, if he were to live over again, that he *would* do ſo; and yet all this may be meerly the *Paſſion*, and not at all the *Duty* of Repentance. The *Duty of Repentance*, is an *entire change of Mind* and an *effectual reformation of Life:* But the *Paſſion of Sorrow and Remorſe*, is ſuch as accurſed Spirits ſhall be for ever tormented with in vain; and ſuch as a dying Penitent can never be ſecure that his late Repentance will exceed. Many upon a Bed of Sickneſs, have made all the *holy Vows* and *pious Reſolutions* that could be deſired; nay, perhaps there is hardly any wicked Man, who when he thinks he is about to die, does not deſire and deſign to amend; yet how few are there of theſe, who if they recover, do ever make good thoſe Vows and Reſolutions? And no late Penitent can ever be ſure, that this would not be his own Caſe. When an habitual Sinner is *in Time* convinced of the evil of his ways, and reſolves and endeavours in earneſt to reform, while he has Life, and Health, and Strength to do it;

it; yet ſeldom does he at the firſt trial work himſelf up to ſuch an effectual and prevailing Reſolution againſt his Sin, as to change his whole courſe of Life in an inſtant, and *at once* deliver himſelf *out of the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*, Rom. 8. 21. Uſually he proceeds by degrees; and after many Relapſes and renewed Reſolutions, arrives at laſt to a ſettled and ſteady courſe of Piety. How much leſs then can a late Penitent, who labours under all the contrary diſadvantages, ever be ſecure that his *Repentance* will be *ſincere*, and his *Reſolutions effectual* enough to tranſlate him at one effort *from the power of Darkneſs, into the Kingdom of God?*

3. For this Reaſon the Ancients never admitted any to the Peace and Communion of the Church, who began not their Repentance before the time of Sickneſs. *Thoſe*, ſaith St. *Cyprian*, *who would not in time repent, and by publick Lamentation teſtifie their hearty Sorrow for their Sins, we utterly reject from all hope of Peace and Reconciliation, if in the time of Sickneſs and Danger they begin to intreat; becauſe then 'tis not true Repentance for their Sin, but the fear of approaching Death, that drives them to beg for Mercy; and no one is worthy to receive any comfort in Death, who never conſidered beforehand that he was to die.*

4. But, Secondly, Suppoſing a late Repentance to be *hearty and ſincere*, yet have we no *poſitive and abſolute Promiſe*, that it ſhall be accepted. The plain and expreſs Condition of the Covenant eſtabliſhed by Chriſt, is a *Holy Life*; that is, a conſtant and perſevering Obedience to all the Commands of God, (in a Goſpel and Merciful Senſe allowing for humane Weakneſſes and Imperfections,) from the time of our Baptiſm or of our coming to the knowledge of the Truth, until the end of our Lives: And the leaſt that can poſſibly lay Claim to the Reward promiſed upon this Condition, is ſuch a Repentance as produces the *actual Obedience* or at leaſt ſome proportionable part of a Man's Life.

5. To ſay that the Original Condition of the Chriſtian Covenant is ſuch, that a Man may ſafely live wickedly all his Life, and ſatisfie all his Luſts and Appetites to the utmoſt, provided he does but leave off and forſake his Sins at the laſt; is really to take away the neceſſity of a Holy Life, and to undermine the very Foundation of all Virtue.

Virtue. For conſidering on the one hand how *prevailing* the *Cuſtom of the World*, how *deceitful* the *Temptation of the Devil*, and how *powerful* the *Aſſaults of Luſt and Paſſion* are; and on the other hand how ſeldom *ſudden Death* happens, and how little the *Excellency of the Chriſtian Life* is underſtood; it will be hard, according to this Doctrine, to find Arguments ſufficiently ſtrong to move Men to repent and to reform immediately; If there be no other *danger*, but in *ſudden Death*; and no greater *malignity in Sin*, than what may be cured by an *eaſie and ſhort Repentance at laſt*; moſt Men *will* venture to be wicked at preſent, and truſt to the opportunities of growing better afterward. Though therefore God may poſſibly have reſerves of Mercy, which *in event* he *may* exerciſe towards Men in their laſt extremity; yet *Originally* 'tis certain the Goſpel Covenant gives no aſſurance of Comfort but either to a *conſtant and perſevering Holineſs*, or to a *Repentance evidenced by actually renewed Obedience.*

6. At Baptiſm indeed, or whenever we firſt come to the knowledge of the Truth, all paſt ſins are ſo entirely forgiven and waſh'd away by the Blood of Chriſt, that Repentance, though it has no time to evidence it ſelf in the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, is without all Controverſie available to Salvation: But when Men who have by Baptiſm Covenanted ſolemnly with God for a Holy Life, and confirmed that Covenant by other repeated Promiſes and Reſolutions, ſhall yet wilfully live in Sin; and notwithſtanding the expreſs Threatnings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that they who do ſo *ſhall not not inherit the Kingdom of God*; notwithſtanding the earneſt Exhortations and Warnings of God's Miniſters: and notwithſtanding the perpetual Reproaches of their own Conſciences, continue obſtinately to do ſo; ſuch Perſons have no reaſon in the World to expect, that God will at laſt accept their *late*, *unactive*, and *ineffectual* Repentance. The *penitent Thief* was received by our Saviour, as any other Infidel undoubtedly may be, who towards the end of his Life is convinced of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, and heartily embraces it; but there is nothing like a Promiſe in Scripture, that the *unactive* Repentance of a *Chriſtian*, who has lived all his Life in notorious Wickedneſs, ſhall be accepted at the Hour of Death:

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The *Labourers* who were hired into the *Vineyard* at the Eleventh Hour, received indeed the ſame Wages with them that had born the burden and heat of the Day; but our Saviour has no where promiſed, that baptized and profeſſed Chriſtians, who are hired into the Vineyard in the Morning, if *they* Riot away all the Day in Idleneſs and Wickedneſs, ſhall at Night be accepted for their profeſſing their Sorrow that they have not wrought.

7. Let thoſe Men conſider theſe things, who reſolve *now* to enjoy *the Pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon*, and hope *hereafter* by a late Repentance to get a ſhare alſo in the *eternal Rewards of Virtue*. Let them conſider that they *may* be cut off in the midſt of their Hopes; or that they *may* be as unwilling to repent hereafter, as they are at preſent: But *above all* let them conſider, That though they *ſhould* live to that time, when they ſhall be willing to leave their Sins, becauſe the ſtrength of their Temptations will ceaſe; yet they cannot be ſure, that God will *then* accept them. The expreſs Condition of the Goſpel is, that we ſeek *firſt* the Kingdom of God, that we *deny* our ſelves, and that we *overcome* the World: How ſlender therefore muſt be the hopes of thoſe, who ſpend their *Life and ſtrength* in the enjoyments of *this World*, and make *Religion* nor their *firſt* but their *laſt* Refuge? Are the Glories of Heaven ſo inconſiderable? Or is the Duty we owe to God ſo ſmall, that he ſhould accept our coldeſt and moſt unwilling Service? *Offer the Blind for Sacrifice; offer the Lame and Sick; offer it now unto thy Governour; will he be pleaſed with thee?* Mal. 1.7. How much leſs will God accept us, when we are leaſt fit to ſerve him, and in thoſe Days wherein we our ſelves *have no pleaſure?*

8. Terrible are the Threatnings which the Scripture denounceth againſt thoſe, who refuſe to hear the Voice of God when he calleth, and to ſeek him whilſt he may be found. *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand and no Man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my Counſel, and would have none of my Reproof: I alſo will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Deſolation, and your Deſtruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Diſtreſs and Anguiſh cometh upon you: Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: For that*

they hated Knowledge, and did not chuſe the Fear of the Lord, Prov. 1. 24. *&c.* When the *Jews* whom God had *ſaved out of the Land of Egypt*, and was *grieved* with them 40 *Years* in the Wilderneſs, and had brought them to the Borders of the promiſed *Canaan*, *deſpiſed that good Land*, and refuſed to enter therein; he *ſware unto them in his Wrath that they ſhould not enter into his Reſt*: And when afterward they reſolved to go up and poſſeſs it, he ſuffer'd them not: *Eſau* in like manner *for one morſel of Bread ſold his birthright*, Heb. 12. 17. And *afterward, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing*, the Scripture tells us that *he was rejected*; *for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears*. All which things the Apoſtle declares plainly to be *written for our Example*; *Leſt there be any Fornicator, or profane Perſon* among us, as *Eſau* was; and leſt any among us *tempt God, as the* Jews *alſo tempted*, and *fall after the ſame Example of Unbelief*.

9. Let thoſe therefore who have yet the Time before them, conſider what they have to do: Let them be careful to hearken unto the Voice of God *to Day, whilſt it is called to Day*: Let them be zealous to improve that Time and thoſe Talents wherewith God has bleſſed them; that when their Maſter cometh he may find them *ſo doing*, and bid them, as having been good and faithful Servants, to enter into the Joy of their Lord.

10. The Summ of this Point is this. When a Chriſtian has lived wickedly all his Life, and comes at his *laſt extremity* to be convinced of his Folly, and to deſire to Amend; how far the Mercy of God may *poſſibly* extend it ſelf, we *cannot* tell; and therefore ſuch a one is not to be *abſolutely* ſwallowed up in *compleat* Deſpair: But to all thoſe, who have yet *any* ſpace and opportunity left, it ought to be ſtrongly and perpetually inculcated, that the Goſpel Covenant allows not the *leaſt* hopes to any other Repentance, than ſuch as has time to evidence it ſelf in the *actual* and *perſevering* Obedience of a Holy Life.

CHAP. IV.

That true Repentance muſt be Great: And of Penance.

1. *Secondly*, True Repentance ought to be very *Great*; that is, he that repents ought to affect his Mind with ſuch a *deep Sorrow* and *hatred* of Sin, as will put him

him upon thoſe afflictive Duties of *Faſting*, *Watching*, *Praying*, *Humiliation*, *Liberal Alms*, and the like.

2. And the Reaſon of this is; Firſt, Becauſe in many Caſes Repentance cannot otherwiſe be evidenced to be real and ſincere. True Repentance is an *effectual change of Mind*, and an *actual amendment of Life*: And as a bare *change of Mind* is not an acceptable Repentance, unleſs it *produces* an actual *amendment of Life*; ſo neither is a bare *amendment of Life*, unleſs it *proceeds* from a real *change of Mind*. There are many Caſes, wherein a Man may leave off committing an habitual Sin, and yet not truly repent of it: Some accidental change of the Circumſtances of his Life, ſome preſent worldly and temporal Intereſt, or ſome other like Cauſe, may reſtrain a Man from continuing in a cuſtomary Sin; and yet he may retain ſuch an affection to it, ſuch a readineſs to return to it in his former Circumſtances, or at leaſt may have ſo little Hatred and Reſolution againſt it, as may make him very far from a true Penitent. In all ſuch Caſes therefore, where a Man may break off a Sin upon any other Conſideration, than the Love of God and a true Senſe of Religion; 'tis neceſſary for the evidencing the Truth of his Repentance, and for the preſerving him from impoſing upon his own Mind, that he teſtifie his Sincerity and the Reality of his change of Mind, by ſome ſuch afflictive, laborious, or expenſive Duties, as will prove him to have indeed attained ſuch a religious temper of Mind, as would be ſufficient to preſerve him in the like Circumſtances from returning again to the ſame, or to any other the like wilful Sin. Were this rightly conſidered, Men would not ſo eaſily ſin on ſecurely *at preſent*, and impoſe upon themſelves with vain hopes of growing better *afterward* with leſs Pains, when ſome particular alteration of their Circumſtances of Life, or perhaps Age and Sickneſs, ſhall have removed their Temptations.

3. But ſecondly, When amendment of Life does alone ſufficiently evidence the ſincerity of Repentance (as generally and in moſt Caſes it does,) yet ought thoſe who have ſinned to do *ſomething* to teſtifie their Sorrow for paſt Offences, and to *judge themſelves*, that they *may not be judged of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 11. 31. They ought to take Shame to themſelves, that after having *received the knowledge of the*

Truth, and having been *made partakers of the heavenly Gift*, and having *tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, they ſhould again have returned to Sin and Folly: They ought to conſider with Confuſion of Face the Ingratitude of having *again* committed thoſe things, which are ſo hateful to God, that he has threatned to puniſh the *continuance in them* with everlaſting Deſtruction, and would not *once* pardon them under a leſs Ranſom than the Blood of his only Son: And theſe Conſiderations ought to work in them that *Carefulneſs*, that *Indignation*, that *Fear*, that *vehement Deſire*, that *Zeal*, and that *Revenge*; of which (St. *Paul* tells us) conſiſteth that *godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.*

4. Thus when St. *Peter* had thrice denied his Maſter, the Conſideration of the Shamefulneſs and Ingratitude of the thing, made him, when he thought thereon, *weep bitterly*. Thus when *David* had committed thoſe crying Sins of Adultery and Murder, the Conſideration of the foulneſs and baſeneſs of the Fact, made him *every night waſh his Bed* and *water his Couch with his Tears*; and extorted from him thoſe bitter Complaints, of which the greateſt part of his Penitential Pſalms are made up. And all the *Saints*, who ever fell into any notorious Sin, were very ſevere in their Humiliation, earneſtly deſiring that God would give them their Puniſhment in this World, *that* their *Spirit might be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus.*

5. For this Reaſon St. *James* adviſes thoſe who had ſinned, to *be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*; to *let* their *Laughter be turned to Mourning, and* their *Joy to Heavineſs*; and to *humble* themſelves *in the ſight of the Lord*, that *he* might *lift* them *up*. And the Primitive Church always taught, That *Sins committed wilfully after the knowledge and belief of the Truth, were to be done away with Labour and Sorrow*: That *ſuch Sins were not immediately forgiven upon a Mans beginning to repent, but after he had afflicted his Soul, and humbled himſelf deeply, and undergone many Troubles*: That the *afflictive Duties of Repentance ought to bear ſome proportion to the greatneſs of the Sin*: That *the Penitent ought to ſpend much time in Watching, Faſting, Praying, and giving much Alms*: And that *by how much the more ſeverely he judged himſelf here, by ſo much the more might he hope God would ſpare him, and be merciful to him hereafter.*

6. 'Tis true, the Sin which the Ancients particularly reſpect-

reſpected, when they preached up the neceſſity of this ſevere Repentance, was no leſs then that of *denying our Saviour*. But if we conſider the Matter impartially, what great difference is there between renouncing Chriſtianity, and living in an open and profane contempt of Religion; in the Practice of manifeſt Injuſtice, Fraud and Oppreſſion; or in notorious and habitual intemperance? Only they who denied Chriſt, did it being compelled by great and long Torments; but theſe other Vices are committed wilfully and of choice.

7. Very great Reaſon therefore there is, why thoſe, who have been guilty of *great and wilful Sins*, ſhould enjoyn themſelves a *great and remarkable Repentance*. But yet becauſe after all, the *End* and *Deſign*, the whole *Summ* and *Life* of Repentance, is *Reformation*; therefore no Man ought to impoſe upon himſelf any other Penitential Severities, than ſuch as are directly conducive to this main End. Ridiculous and fooliſh were the Penances enjoyned Men in the dark and more ignorant Ages of the Church; becauſe they neither tended to improve the Virtues of Mens own Minds, nor to make Men more Uſeful and Beneficial to others: But ſuch Penitential Exerciſes, as directly mortifie Mens Luſts and Paſſions, or lead them to be more Charitable and do more Good in the World: in theſe, by how much the Penitent is more ſtrict and conſtant, by ſo much is he more ſecure of the *Sincerity of his Repentance*, and of the *Fulneſs of his Pardon*.

8. The *beſt* therefore, and the *greateſt*, and the moſt *effectual* Repentance, that a Man can poſſibly exerciſe, is, to endeavour to be *ſo much the more* careful in mortifying his Vices, and *ſo much the more* zealous in improving all Opportunities of doing Good, by how much he has formerly been more faulty in any Particular: And to reſolve, by how much *the more* he hopes to have *forgiven* him, to *Love* ſo much *the more*. Let him, if he has been vanquiſh'd by any temptation, reſolve to ſtrengthen himſelf ſo much the more againſt it, and to become for the future the more heroically Virtuous: *He that thus endeavours to appeaſe God, and by the Repentance, and Shame, and Sorrow of his paſt Faults, is ſpurred on to exerciſe greater Faith, and Virtue, and Courage; ſuch a one, by the aſſiſtance of God may become a Joy to the Church, which he before made ſorrowful; and ſhall obtain not only the*

Pardon of his Sins, *but also the* Crown of Righteousness.

9. Particularly, a Penitent ought above all things to endeavour after a *great and fervent Charity*. This is a Duty which all wise and Holy Men have in all Ages thought to have an especial Efficacy to procure Pardon of Sin: And very great are the Promises which are made to it in Scripture: *Alms*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, Eccluſ. 3. 30. And *Charity*, saith St. *Peter*, *shall cover a multitude of Sins*, 1 Pet. 4. 8. And *the merciful*, saith our Saviour himself, *shall obtain Mercy*, Matth. 5. 7 Only Men must not hope by this or any other means to obtain a Liberty of continuing in Sin: For Charity *shall* procure forgiveness of Sins past, repented of, and forsaken; but not of Sins committed upon presumption of their being expiated thereby.

CHAP. V.

That true Repentance must be Constant and Persevering in its Effects: And of the One Repentance of the Ancients.

1. *Thirdly* and *Lastly*, True Repentance must be *Constant and Persevering* in its Effects; that is, it must put a Man into such a state, as that he will not any more return wilfully unto Sin. Till it arrive to this Pitch, Repentance is not true, and (however Men may deceive themselves with vain Imaginations about it,) can never be effectual to Salvation. The Condition that our Saviour expressly requires in his Gospel, is a continued Holy Life from the time of our knowing and embracing the Truth: But certainly he will never accept of any thing less, than a Life of Holiness and Persevering Obedience from some Period of Reformation and Repentance.

2. He therefore that repents, ought to be infinitely fearful of relapsing into Sin, as one that is recovering out of a dangerous and almost mortal Sickness. When ever he wilfully relapses, he makes his Case worse than it was at first, and his Disease more in danger of being mortal; It becomes much harder for him to renew himself unto Repentance, and much more difficult to procure Pardon.

3. 'Tis true, evil Habits are not to be rooted out at once, and vicious Customs to be overcome in a moment. So long therefore as a Man does not return wilfully and deliberately into the habit of Sin, many Surprizes and Interruptions

ruptions in the ſtruggle with a cuſtomary Vice may be conſiſtent with the *Progreſs* of Repentance: But 'tis *then* only that it becomes *compleat and effectual*, when the evil habit is ſo entirely rooted out, that the Man from thenceforward obeys the Commandments of God without looking back, and returns no more to the Sins he has condemned.

4. Let no Man therefore think, that he has truly repented of any deadly Sin, ſo long as he continues to practiſe and repeat it. *He that waſhed himſelf after the touching of a dead Body, if he touch it again, what availeth his waſhing? So is it with a Man that faſteth for his Sins, and goeth again and doeth the ſame; who will hear his Prayer? Or what doth his humbling profit him?* Eccluſ. 34. 25. He may faſt, and pray, and lament, and uſe all the apparent ſigns of Repentance imaginable; but God will never eſteem his Repentance true, nor accept it as available to the forgiveneſs of Sin, till he ſees it *Pure*, and *Conſtant*, and *Perſevering*.

5. And this I underſtand to be the Reaſon, why the Ancient Church never allowed but one Repentance after Baptiſm. They taught, that *if any one after that great and holy Calling ſhould be tempted by the Devil and Sin, he had one ſpace of Repentance; but if he ſhould often Sin and Repent, it would not profit him; for he ſhould hardly live unto God.* They taught, That *Man covenanted with Man in Baptiſm for a Holy Life; but God foreſeeing the weakneſs of Man, and the ſubtilty of the Devil, made Proviſion, that if any one, after that great and ſolemn Covenant, ſhould either by the violence or deceitfulneſs of Temptation, be drawn into groſs and deadly Sin, he ſhould ſtill have another place of Repentance: but if after this he continued to go on in a Circle of Sinning and Repenting, that then he was to be looked upon as no other than a Heathen and an Infidel, only as he differed in the wilfulneſs and in the guilt of his Sin:* And according to this Doctrine did they conſtantly deal with their Penitents; always admitting thoſe that repented to the Peace and Communion of the Church *once*; but if afterward they ſinned oftner, and pretended to Repent, excluding them utterly.

6. Now by this 'tis plain they did not mean, that if any one ſinned and repented, and after that ſinned again, that ſuch a one was utterly loſt, and abſolutely excluded from all hope of finding further Mercy and Pardon with God: For *though the Church wiſely appointed, that a place of publick*

lick Repentance for great and ſcandalous Sins ſhould be allowed but once, leſt the Remedy by being made too eaſie ſhould grow uſeleſs and contemptible; (as afterward by Experience it was found to do;) *yet no Man preſumed to ſet Limits to the Mercy and Forgiveneſs of God.* And therefore they always exhorted and incouraged Men to repent ſo long as they had Life and Health. *Let us repent*, ſaith St. *Clement, whilſt we are yet upon the Earth: For we are as Clay in the hand of the Potter. For as the Potter if he make a Veſſel and it be miſhaped in his Hands or broken, forms it anew; but if he has gone ſo far as to throw into the Furnace of Fire, he can no more remedy it: So we, while we are in this World, let us repent with our whole Heart of all the Evil we have done in the Fleſh, that we may be ſaved by the Lord. For, after we ſhall have departed out of this World, we ſhall have no Place to confeſs our Sins, or to repent any more.*

7. The Primitive Church therefore, I ſay, by allowing but *One* Repentance for great Crimes committed after Baptiſm, did not mean that true Repentance would at any time be in vain or unacceptable in the ſight of God: But becauſe Repentance never is true and effectual, till it reſtore a Man to ſuch a ſtate of new Obedience, that he will not wilfully fall into groſs and ſcandalous Sins any more; and becauſe he that having once done long and publick Penance for a groſs and ſcandalous Crime, did yet afterward fall into the ſame or the like again, could not poſſibly give any greater Evidence of the ſincerity of his Repentance to the Church, than he had done before; therefore they did not think fit to admit ſuch relapſed Criminals to the Peace and Communion of the Church any more, leſt they ſhould again give occaſion to blaſpheme the Name of Chriſt and his Holy Religion.

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8. Thus infinitely ſolicitous were thoſe holy Men, not to give Men the leaſt poſſible encouragement to continue in Sin, and yet very careful at the ſame time not to drive any Man to Diſpair. Let *us* conſider theſe things; and while we rightly maintain that true Repentance cannot at any time be in vain or ineffectual to procure Pardon, let us be careful not to entertain any ſuch Notions of Repentance, as will take away the Neceſſity of a Holy Life, and that Perſevering Obedience, which is the expreſs and indiſpenſable Condition of the Goſpel-Covenant.

THE END.

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